

Students and Class Warfare: The Social Roots of the Red Guard Conflict in Guangzhou (Canton)

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Until recent years, scholars of modern China had generally assumed that in the Cultural Revolution violence of 1966–68 young people were almost arbitrarily joining one or the other of the opposing Red Guard groups. Only within the past few years have researchers begun to unveil the antagonism among students early in the Cultural Revolution over “class” issues¹ and the resulting differences in the composition, tactics and goals of the Red Guard factions.²

In this paper we shall move a step further and show that the students’ divergent interests were already coming to the surface in the high schools in the years preceding the Cultural Revolution. It shall be seen in Part I that the conflict among students stemmed from the facts that (i) most urban high school (*zhongxue*) students in the mid-1960s faced narrowing prospects for upward mobility; (ii) their growing competition to get into higher education was aggravated by shifts in the admissions criteria used by the universities and high schools; (iii) the response of many students focused on increasingly anxious efforts to enter the Communist Youth League; and (iv) this contest to win political credentials fostered antagonisms between students of different class backgrounds. In Part II we shall be showing how these “class” antagonisms became transformed into Red Guard factionalism.

The three authors independently conducted doctoral research touching upon the issues that will be discussed here. Cumulatively, in our research in Hong Kong during 1975 and 1976 we conducted more than 400 interviews with emigrants from China who had been high school students in the 1960s.

Because we had access primarily to interviewees from Guangzhou and because the documentation from Guangzhou is the most complete, in this paper we shall be concentrating on the facts and events of that city. But our evidence from the rest of urban China points, we believe,

1. D. Gordon White: *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Centre, Australian National University, Contemporary China Paper No. 9, 1976).

2. Hong Yung Lee: “The Radical Students in Kwangtung during the Cultural Revolution,” *CQ*, No. 64 (December 1975). Also Hong Yung Lee: *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

to trends similar to those in Guangzhou and to the same general conclusions.

Part I: Pre-Cultural Revolution Tensions

A Crisis of Dwindling Opportunities

In the mid-1960s high school students in Guangzhou had unexpectedly found themselves faced with a set of harsh prospects. Their chances of going on to a university were becoming progressively less favourable, and when they graduated from high school they would have only a modest likelihood of finding urban jobs.

In earlier years, students' opportunities had been altogether different. During the First Five Year Plan, with its demands for large numbers of new experts, the government's higher education programmes had in fact called for *more* university entrants than there were senior high school graduates available.³ In 1957 the rapidly expanding output of the senior high schools had finally overtaken the intake needs of the universities.⁴ But almost immediately, with the advent of the Great Leap Forward, there had been newly rosy estimates of China's future. The demands for new university entrants again outpaced what the senior high schools could provide, and as late as 1960 the *People's Daily* was fretting that it would be difficult to fill the university openings for the 1960–61 school year. The government that year was going so far as to instruct employers to deny jobs to all new senior-high graduates, in order to force even the reluctant amongst them to sign up for the university entrance examinations.⁵ Up through 1960, in other words, the students who won entry to senior high school had felt all but assured that they would be able to go on to a university.

The situation very quickly changed after 1960, however, as the Great Leap Forward collapsed into severe economic depression. Even when the depression lifted, moreover, new university enrolments were kept down. Government organs had apparently come to the realization during the early 1960s that most of their vacancies for highly trained personnel had been gradually filled since the early 1950s and that the time would soon arrive when they would require little more than replacements for personnel who retired.

In keeping with this decision to put a halt to university expansion, no additional academic-track senior high schools were established in Guangzhou after 1961. But the high school programmes that had been inaugurated before that date assured a continued over-production of

3. The state was obliged to recruit from government offices and amongst primary school staffs, etc., to make up the difference. The state went so far as to offer applicants a quarter year's paid leave to prepare for the entrance exams.

4. *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), 25 April 1957.

5. *Renmin Ribao*, 4 June 1960; in *SCMP* (*Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press*) 2285, p. 17.

senior-high graduates. From extensive interviewing it can be estimated that in 1965, the last year of enrolments before the Cultural Revolution, less than 30 per cent (perhaps only 20 per cent) of Guangzhou's academic-track senior-high graduates were gaining admission to universities – a far cry from the near certainty of success half a decade earlier. Young people had been faced within a short period with the painful option of either lowering their sights or stepping up their own competitive efforts to succeed.

A great many of the students chose the latter competitive course. One strong reason was that if they failed to get into universities they would have to confront an increasingly serious crisis in Guangzhou's job market. For one thing, the rapid expansion of factory employment in the 1950s meant that the industrial workforce in the 1960s was still comparatively young, and therefore relatively few new vacancies were being created in the factories for the new graduates coming out of school. Moreover, during the "three years of hardship" of 1960–62, Guangzhou's industry had needed practically no new personnel at all and had in fact sacked a portion of its labour force. A backlog of unsuccessful young jobseekers had built up, and as industry and commerce revived in 1963 and 1964 these youths competed with the new and yet younger jobseekers for whatever openings became available.

Moreover, Guangzhou was just beginning to pay the price for the city's baby boom of the early 1950s. In 1949, on the eve of Guangzhou's liberation, the city's birth rate had stood at 27 per thousand population, and with peace and growing prosperity had shot up to 44 per thousand by 1954.⁶ The authorities, looking ahead to the crowds of youths born after liberation who were poised to start leaving junior high school after 1965, were beginning to warn the public through the national media that urban job prospects would only continue to worsen. In March 1964, *People's Daily* was already stating bluntly that

Several million students graduate annually from secondary and primary schools in the urban areas. With the exception of a few students who will continue to study at higher-level schools or be employed in urban areas, the majority will take part in agricultural tasks . . . in hilly and rural areas.⁷

The students were facing increasing reasons and arguments to put their signatures to applications to settle in the countryside: intense political proselytization of graduating high school classes; repeated

6. The 1949 figure is from a Reuter's interview with Guangzhou officials (*Hong Kong Standard*, 18 October 1965). The 1954 citation is from Ezra Vogel: *Canton Under Communism* (Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 369.

7. Cited in "Youth to the Countryside – and Back Again," *Current Scene*, Vol. V, No. 16 (1 October 1967), p. 5. This message, with almost the same wording, began to reappear somewhat frequently in the press, as in *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (*China Youth News*), 7 January 1965, and *Jingji Yanjiu* (*Economic Research*), November 1965, in *SCMM* 507, p. 17.

editorials in the mass media; dwindling opportunities to climb further up the educational ladder; restrictions both official and unofficial on urban employment⁸; and even promises that a willingness to settle in the countryside would improve a youth's subsequent chances for career and study opportunities.⁹ All of these appeals, though were broached in a strongly ideological/moral language. The youths who volunteered were ideally supposed to view their settlement in the countryside as a victory in a test of their political convictions, not as a failure to climb into higher education or as a failure by the economy to provide the necessary jobs. But most students still viewed settlement in the countryside as a last resort; and the annual figures on volunteers suggest that the graduating students were regarding their prospects in the city with increasing despair. In 1962, during the depths of the depression, no more than a thousand of Guangzhou's new high school graduates had left for the countryside, and most of these had been the children of peasants returning home.¹⁰ By contrast, in 1964, once the unemployment situation looked as though it was going to be permanent, over a thousand high school graduates were enlisted to go, almost every one of them from urban homes.¹¹ It was the highest number of students ever recruited; and it looked like a record that would be annually surpassed. In 1965, the year before the Cultural Revolution, 5,100 students went to the villages directly upon graduating¹² – five times more than in 1964 and about a quarter of all the students in Guangzhou's graduating junior and senior high school classes. While up to 1964 young people had been told they would be going to the countryside for only four years and would retain their urban residence cards,¹³ the new volunteers were told they might be going for life.

The writing was clearly on the wall for their younger brothers and sisters. And, as so many of the young people felt compelled to go by the prospects of urban unemployment, those still in school could no longer so readily see settlement in the countryside as a glorious challenge that demonstrated a student's revolutionary determination.¹⁴

8. These Guangzhou regulations are described in *China Background*, No. 17/68.

9. As an example, a bad-class interviewee was told in 1965 that if she settled in a village she would be permitted to re-register from there for the next year's university entrance exams.

10. *Yangcheng Wanbao*, Guangzhou (19 September 1962); *Nanfang Ribao* (*Southern Daily*), Guangzhou, 23 April 1963.

11. Guangzhou Radio, November 19 1964; in *News from the Chinese Provincial Radio Stations* (U.K. Government). They were accompanied by 10,000 of Guangzhou's "social youths," i.e. youths who were long-time unemployed.

12. *Nanfang Ribao*, 5 January 1966, p. 3.

13. The time they were supposed to spend in the countryside varied from two to four years. For those willing to go to hardship areas, say to help wipe out blood flukes, a shorter two-year "contract" was drawn up.

14. For the different perspectives adopted by the young people who were

The countryside began to appear as a dumping ground for the cities' unwanted failures. Students became more concerned than ever to squeeze into the higher levels of schooling.

Educational Recruitment Policies

The political leadership had to determine which of these students would be admitted into the higher schools. If the authorities tilted the admissions priorities one way or the other they would favour students from different types of homes. Had the state only been concerned with rapid economic development, a simple perusal of academic scores would have sufficed; but the (children of the pre-liberation intelligentsia, by performing best on the examinations, would have taken most of the university places. This went against the Party's principle of redistributing opportunities in favour of the formerly deprived classes.

Hence not only academic achievement had to be counted, but also the students' "class origins." A "class" designation based on the Party's investigations into the father's employment for the three years prior to Guangzhou's liberation had been included in each child's dossier. These "class" labels were ranked hierarchically. The families of the pre-liberation workers and former "poor and lower-middle peasants" were grouped among the "good" or "red" classes. At the very top of the "good classes," family heads who had participated in the revolution prior to liberation as PLA officers or party officials had been granted the special "class" label of "revolutionary cadre," and their children were listed in dossiers under the privileged title of "revolutionary-cadre children." The families of the pre-liberation professionals, white-collar workers, pedlars, and middle peasants were now ranked as "middle class," neither entirely trusted nor discriminated against. Among the "bad classes," the formerly capitalist families, who were presumed to have been opposed to imperialism and feudalism, fared better in the official rankings than landlord families or persons officially labelled as "counter-revolutionary." Each applicant's standing in this hierarchy of family backgrounds could be weighed fairly precisely by the higher-school admissions officers.

rusticated at different times during the 1960s, as well as their divergent behaviour during the Cultural Revolution, see Stanley Rosen: *The Role of Sent-Down Youth in the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Case of Canton* (Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, forthcoming). See also Gordon White: "The Politics of Hsia-hsiang Youth," *CQ*, No. 59 (July 1974); John Gardner, "Educated Youth and Urban-Rural Inequalities," in John W. Lewis (ed.), *The City in Communist China* (Stanford University Press, 1971); and Anita Chan, Richard Madsen and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village* (forthcoming), Chapter 4. On the perspectives of urban young people towards the post-Cultural Revolution rustication policies, see also Thomas Bernstein: *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Jonathan Unger, "China's Troubled Down-to-the-Countryside Campaign," *Contemporary China*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 1979).

The Official "Class" Categorizations in Urban China
(inheritable in the male line)

Good-class origins (jieji chengfen haode), also referred to in China as the "five red kinds" (*hongwulei*). These five are:

- (a) Politically red inheritances (the families headed by pre-liberation Party members, plus the orphans of men who died in the revolutionary wars):
 - (1) Revolutionary cadres;
 - (2) Revolutionary army men;
 - (3) Revolutionary martyrs.
- (b) Working-class:
 - (4) Pre-liberation industrial workers and their families;
 - (5) Former poor and lower-middle peasant families.

Middle-class origins (yiban chengfen):

- (a) Non-intelligentsia middle class:
 - Families of pre-liberation pedlars and store clerks, etc.;
 - Former middle-peasant families.
- (b) Intelligentsia:
 - Pre-liberation white-collar workers and professionals.

Bad-class origins (jieji chengfen buhaode):

- Families of former capitalists;
- Families of "Rightists" (the label denoting those who were too outspoken in the Hundred Flowers campaign of 1957);
- Pre-liberation rich-peasant families;
- Families of "bad elements" (a label denoting "criminal" offenders);
- Pre-liberation landlord families;
- Families of counter-revolutionaries.

In addition to the entrance-examination scores and these inherited "class" labels, there was also always a third criterion for admission: attention was to be given to the student's personal commitment to the revolutionary cause. The young people with "good" class labels had an advantage here, since they were presumed likely to have inherited their parents' "feelings of gratitude" towards the Party. But it was also official doctrine that children of petty-bourgeois or even exploiting-class background, having been brought up under socialism, could successfully reshape their own attitudes and behaviour. Equally, it was considered possible for a youth of "red" class background to regress. Since attitudes could only be judged through a student's behaviour, a brief dossier on "political performance" accompanied each application for higher education. In this, a key measure was whether the student had been able to win admittance to the Communist Youth League.)

The relative weighting which enrolment officers gave to academic scores as against family background or political behaviour varied year by year, depending on the political climate in China. Class background

and politics gained in importance during the Great Leap Forward, whereas examination results counted for almost everything during the depression year of 1962. From 1963 onward, the balance shifted again, in particular through a progressively stronger "class line" in university admissions policies.

There was a special impetus to this new swing of the pendulum. The crowds of children schooled in the mass education efforts of the 1950s were coming of age, and in the sixties for the first time there were more than enough university candidates from "red" homes. With the revolution's commitment to its redistributive goals being put to the test as growing numbers of these "red" class youths found their expectations for upward mobility disappointed, the pressures began rising from the Party's left for the criteria to be tilted more in such youths' favour.¹⁵ But at least up to the Cultural Revolution the swing in this direction was never permitted to displace academic achievement as the most heavily weighted of the three admissions criteria. Part of the leadership was arguing successfully that the pursuit of the revolution's modernization goals precluded the exclusion from universities of the most academically capable of the intelligentsia's children.

Each of the university candidates was permitted to apply to a list of schools of his or her own choosing. Similarly, applicants to junior and senior high schools in Guangzhou were allowed to apply to up to four schools of their own choice. Some of the Guangzhou high schools had better reputations, and young people who were ambitious to go to a university vied to get into these high schools. When deciding which high school to designate as their first choice they were influenced most by the figures showing the percentage of graduates from each school who had recently been able to get into universities.

The administrators of the "key point" schools were eager to maintain their own school's reputation. They knew that not just applicants but also Guangzhou's leaders were judging their school's quality by looking at its success in getting students admitted to universities. The school's funding and their own careers were partly tied to such success. The high schools were all allowed to select their own students, and the school heads were aware that to continue to place a high percentage of their students into universities they would have to show good judgment in choosing a high-school student intake with the right mix of qualifications. If the universities' admissions policies shifted, so too would their own.

Accordingly, as the class line in university admissions strengthened in the mid-1960s the top-ranking "key point" high schools in Guangzhou began increasing the proportions of their own incoming students who were of "red" family background. For this they turned to appli-

15. On this debate up to the present day, see Jonathan Unger: "The Chinese Controversy Over Higher Education," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Spring 1980).

Table 1: The "Class Composition" of Guangzhou Secondary Schools, 1962-66

		<i>"Key-point" schools</i>			<i>The 28 neighbourhood jr. highs</i>
		<i>The "best" 4 schools</i>	<i>The next-best 8 schools</i>	<i>The 18 ordinary schools</i>	
<i>Official pre-liberation background of fathers</i>					
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	"Revolutionary cadre"	27%	16%	7%	
	Good-class worker and peasant	12%	16%	16%	
	Non-"intelligentsia" middle class ^a	16%	11%	17%	
	"Intelligentsia" middle class ^b	34%	43%	27%	
	Overseas Merchants ^c	2%	3%	6%	
	Bad class	9%	11%	27% (Note 1)	
		100%	100%	100%	
No. of classrooms surveyed		5	8	18	
No. of students in sample		223	351	813	
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	"Revolutionary cadre"	48%	17%	9%	8%
	Good-class worker and peasant	11%	24%	34%	42%
	Non-"intelligentsia" middle class ^a	3%	14%	19%	16%
	"Intelligentsia" middle class ^b	32%	30%	19%	20%
	Overseas Merchants ^c	2%	4%	8%	3%
	Bad class	4%	11%	11%	11%
		100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of classrooms surveyed		5	12	12	14
No. of students in sample		234	603	578	722

cants from the "reddest" of the red-class families – the children of the Party elite. At the same time, though, the other competing high schools held the leeway to pursue their own alternative admissions strategies. A couple of schools that ranked slightly below the top, for example, gambled that they could improve their own standing in the ratings game by accepting the most prestigious schools' academically excellent rejects. These students were mostly from the families of the middle-class intelligentsia.

In this competition, the children of the pre-liberation labouring classes were not coming off very well. The new tilt towards "class" favoured the "revolutionary cadre" students considerably more than themselves; and being from semi-literate homes, the working-class students could attain only an average or below average showing on the selection examinations. The vast majority of the working-class youths only got into their own neighbourhood's third-rate junior highs, and the minority of them who continued into senior high school did so predominantly at the poorer schools. In fact, several such schools in the traditional blue-collar districts of Guangzhou contained almost only children of the pre-liberation labouring classes. (Similarly, a few poorly regarded schools in the west end of Guangzhou, where prior to liberation the city's most exclusive neighbourhoods were to be found, held large numbers of the other major category of losers in the educational competition, the children of Guangzhou's former capitalists.)

Table 1 lends statistical support to these findings. The table was compiled from questionnaires filled out in Hong Kong in 1975–76 by 74 former Guangzhou students. They have supplied information about each of the students in their own high school classrooms, providing us with a second-hand survey of 3,524 students. The respondents tended to be very familiar with the circumstances of their classmates. They had been kept together in the same classroom units throughout the

^a The children of pre-liberation pedlars, store clerks, craftsmen, middle peasants, etc.

^b The children of pre-liberation white-collar staff, professionals, teachers, etc.

^c Children sent to be educated in Guangzhou by parents living abroad.

Note 1: A number of our respondents from the ordinary senior high schools were, by chance, clustered at the several schools in Guangzhou which are located in the traditional neighbourhoods of bad-class households. Accordingly, a disproportionately high number of bad-class students appear in this statistic.

Note 2: The table excludes the couple of Experimental Schools in Guangzhou, since these used different criteria in recruiting students.

Note 3: The strengthening of the class line in the mid-1960s can be observed most clearly in the junior high school enrolments of the better schools. In their senior-high enrolments the schools tended to look kindly upon their own school's junior-high graduates, and therefore the senior-high figures partially reflected the higher mix of middle and bad class students who had entered the better junior-highs in the early 1960s.

several years they were enrolled at their high school; and when the Cultural Revolution erupted, the students generally had not dispersed. They had remained at school during the next two years of combat, with some classmates as comrades-in-arms and some as antagonists. As shall be seen in Part II, moreover, the factor of signal importance when they split into these opposing factions was a student's "class origins." It is not surprising that many of these students can remember the faces and details that had had such relevance to their own lives.

To err if need be on the side of caution, we have culled from our sample any respondents whose recollections seemed incomplete or internally inconsistent.¹⁶ Furthermore, a careful double check was made of many of the remaining respondents' memories several weeks after they first filled in the questionnaires, and those whose recollections appeared erratic were also deleted from our sample. The data here should still of course be treated as inexact, but we are convinced that these statistical results do provide at least reasonably valid indicators as to how students were distributed in Guangzhou's high school system.

It can be seen from the table that the working-class youths still tended in the mid-1960s to be concentrated overwhelmingly at the more mediocre junior highs. It can also be seen that the children of the middle-class intelligentsia were still disproportionately winning entry to the better schools at both the junior and senior-high levels. At the best schools, in fact, they and their classmates of revolutionary-cadre background together comprised a substantial majority of the student body. These children of the Party officialdom and of the middle-class intelligentsia would be very differently affected by the weighting given to "class" as against "academic achievement." It shall be seen in Part II that it was precisely at these good schools and between these two groups of achievement-orientated youths that the Cultural Revolution was to be most fiercely contested.

In short, the structure of the high school system was channelling students of different backgrounds into schools of different qualities, and was doing so in ways that promoted frictions among them. In the sections that follow we shall be examining the nature of these frictions.

Political Activism and the Contest to Join the League

In their competition for the increasingly scarce university places, the students in the 1960s were turning their attention most anxiously

16. So far as we can tell, our over-all results would not have been appreciably altered had we used the questionnaire responses that were culled. Their results are largely in line with the 74 that were used. With two of the classrooms that we did use, moreover, we had an opportunity to cross-check; we received independent responses from two sets of former classmates, and in both cases the correspondence between their recollections was quite close.

towards their records of political performance. They were doing so for at least four salient reasons:

(1) Their own "class" designation was already set, with nothing that they themselves could do to change it. They were also aware that since they and their classmates were already working hard at their studies, any further efforts would not appreciably alter their entrance-examination scores. But a more strenuous and convincing effort to be politically active might pay off in admission to the League, which would confer a high standing on that third criterion for higher-school entry, "politics."

(2) Moreover the students were not directly *competing* against their classmates in their academic work, since the examinations for getting into senior high school were citywide and for university entry were nationwide. But the (arena for "political" competition was only the size of the classroom.) In each class of students there could only be a limited number of League members, and only so many "3-good students" and "student labour activists" could be designated. Thus while classmates could co-operate with each other in their studies without harm to their own interests, they were well aware that in the political sphere one classmate's gain usually meant another's loss.¹⁷ Their attention therefore focused with even greater anxiety upon their own and each other's political efforts.

(3) Reinforcing this, the students had been taught beginning in primary school that it was ideologically incorrect to show competitiveness in their studies, but that they were (*supposed* to strive through their daily behaviour to demonstrate their political dedication.) More than this, they were supposed to do so in a politically effective manner, which meant joining the League organization. Since China holds to a Leninist system, this belief in organized action had been pushed strongly by the schools. The League was presented not only as the "assistant" to the Party; it was also supposed to be the young people's own pivotal leadership core, enabling them more effectively to "serve" the revolution and Party. Many of our interviewees had held to such an image. As one of them recalls, "Most of us kids at that time wanted to be in the League. Almost everyone had an aspiration to improve him or herself. The League was considered glorious, like being a volunteer in a war. One would sacrifice for the people's good, would serve the people."

(4) These feelings were strengthened in the (1960s by new government campaigns to politicize the students.) The rift with Russia had

17. Some of the academically good students turned this to their "political" advantage, since by coaching poorer students in their studies they could chalk up a political good deed to their own credit. It was moreover a political merit that the students weaker in their studies could not compete with them over. Later, in the early months of the Cultural Revolution, some of the academically poorer working-class students expressed resentment at this, and resentment also for the help they had had to receive.

persuaded Mao and other top Party leaders that added efforts had to be made to safeguard the thinking of the new generation. Exhortations began appearing in the youth magazines for the young people to demonstrate they were not "hothouse flowers" who might succumb to "revisionism." Students had begun to attend "recall the bitterness, contemplate the sweet" sessions at which old workers and peasants recounted their earlier sufferings. Mao's writings were inserted increasingly into the students' politics courses,¹⁸ with emphasis upon the sacredness of his "Thought" and the need to live up to it through personal dedication. As the students began vying to win League credentials they were encouraged by this new stronger play on ideology. It enabled them to place their competitiveness in a highly moral light. So much was this so that in some classrooms any students who preferred not to engage in such efforts were apt to find themselves chastized as ethically and politically backward.

It was at the "key point" high schools, where almost all the students were hoping to get into universities, that competitive efforts to get into the League became fiercest. At the average and poorer schools, there seems to have been considerably less interest in engaging in "politics" – and correspondingly fewer League members. In fact, at the third-rate senior highs there was a fear among some of the students, expressed to us in interviews, that too much activism, especially Youth League membership, would put heavy pressure on an unsuccessful university applicant to take the lead in volunteering

Table 2: The Percentage of League Membership in Guangzhou Secondary Schools 1962–66

(from questionnaire recollections)

	<i>"Key-Point" Schools</i>			
	<i>The "best" 4 schools</i>	<i>The next best 8 schools</i>	<i>The 18 ordinary schools</i>	<i>The neighbourhood jr. highs</i>
Senior High	42%	42%	26%	
Numbers of classrooms surveyed	5	8	18	
Junior High	19%	19%	10%	7%
Numbers of classrooms surveyed	5	12	12	14

18. The selections of Mao's works for use in high-school classes, *Mao Zedong Zhuzuo Xuandu*, Types A and B, were first published in 1964 and 1965.

for the countryside. The competition to enter the League, in short, went hand in hand with a youth's hopes for advancement. But as already indicated, many of our more ambitious interviewees had wanted not just further education and careers but idealistic achievements as well. Achievement-orientated youths often seem to have held more strongly to both kinds of desires.

Through membership in the League, students could also hope to acquire a special camaraderie. By senior high school, the League members' spare time was occupied almost constantly by their "organizational life." The mystique of League membership, derived from the League's romantic associations with the revolution's history, was reinforced by these daily personal experiences of shared duties and closed meetings. The League became a private inner sanctum which set League members off from those left outside the gates. League members even deliberately distinguished themselves from ordinary students by wearing the small League badge everywhere. They began to form their own friendship groups, and though many continued also to retain their older friendships with non-League classmates, the non-League interviewees recall a "gap" between themselves and their League-member friends. Many of them held a certain uneasiness about League members in general.

For one thing, the League members had power over them. As one crucial example, it was the League members, voting secretly as a classroom branch, who were the ones empowered to grant or deny them entry to the League. Moreover, in the final year of senior high school the League branch would be helping the class-teacher prepare a report on all of the students to accompany their university applications. Young people who wanted to get ahead in life thus had to curry the League members' favour and to respond positively to the efforts of League members to get them to behave with "activist" propriety.

There were built-in tensions on this score, too. At the same time that conscientious League members tried to show sincere concern for their fellow students' self-improvement, these same League members had to be keenly competitive with their classmates. League members had to be models of good behaviour, which entailed being consistently better than others, and also had to show themselves to be righteous, which could most readily be demonstrated by criticizing and publicizing others' flaws in small-group sessions.

Exacerbating this latter tendency was the fact that League members who stood as keepers-of-the-gate over others' entry to League status had a vested interest in keeping the branch as select as possible. They encouraged others to be activist, but at the same time wanted to keep most of them in their place as not-quite-equal competitors. In small-group meetings, the League members who felt free to criticize others' performance often felt threatened if other participants reciprocated. Interviews indicate that applicants for League membership normally

found it wisest to be competitively activist in relation to other non-members, but to be fawning towards those already in the League.

A few interviewees felt sufficiently uncomfortable with this humble competitiveness that they stopped trying to win admission to the "vanguard." But not many were deterred. Where the great majority of students were hoping to enter universities, the efforts to get into the League sometimes became ferocious.

This competition to obtain political credentials often focused on the spirited carrying out of small "good deeds." In the 1950s that type of activity had been promoted largely in the political education of younger children, not in the secondary schools. But in 1963 a full-blown campaign had begun in China's schools glorifying Lei Feng, a soldier who had died accidentally that year. His diary, found posthumously, had revealed he had been a devoted doer of precisely such anonymous small deeds. Until Lei Feng, the model heroes for teenagers had been wartime heroes who had died on the battlefronts. Now, coincident with the growing stress on political activism after 1963, new heroes were usually portrayed as having been involved in pedestrian tasks and as having died glorious deaths at those tasks. The authorities were trying to press home the view that in the period of socialist construction such mundane livelihoods and sacrifices were the necessary counterparts of the romantic guerrillas of the anti-Japan, civil-war, and Korean War eras. Not great deeds but the habitual performance of tiny acts of "serving the people" was to be the mark of the Lei Feng activist.

High school students, even university students, enthusiastically took up the Lei Feng campaign. Many of them competitively set about seeking unpleasant tasks to engage in – preferably ones which could be done anonymously but at which others might catch them. With League membership or at least a good "activist" record at stake, they washed classmates' dirty laundry; they swept the school floors; they hunted for whatever ingeniously selfless good acts they could accomplish for their classmates or the janitorial staff. The problem was that there simply were not enough small chores on a school campus to go around. In a majority of the interviewees' classrooms, the efforts degenerated gradually into farce. This was especially so at the key-point boarding schools, where students were immersed in the competitive peer-group environment without respite or the corrective influence of adult relatives. Students at some boarding schools vied to wake up earliest before dawn in order to get first crack at sweeping the floors anonymously. There were not sufficient dirty clothes on hand to give everyone the chance to emulate Lei Feng's anonymous deeds, and some students had to resort to re-washing fellow students' already clean laundry. The pettiness of such contrived activities embarrassed some of the students. This discomfort was made worse by the fact that peer-group pressures and their own ambitions obliged them to engage in such games themselves.

Moreover, many of the activities became overlaid with hypocritical sentiments and play-acting. In the "recall the bitterness, contemplate the sweet" meetings, for example, interviewees remember having felt genuinely moved the first several times they participated. But since the meetings were attended by the entire class, there existed strong temptations among students to *show* that they were moved, even if they weren't. In order to demonstrate publicly the depth of their "class feelings," girl students became deliberately tearful.

Students found even their diary-writing caught up in a calculated public show of commitment. Since candidates to the League were half-expected to reveal their diary secrets to their chosen League sponsor in "heart-to-heart talks," many of them were tempted to compose lengthy diaries replete with carefully fabricated feelings and artful self-criticism. Some students at the boarding schools resorted to writing long entries on their devotion to Chairman Mao and the Party (in the Lei Feng diary style) and then left such pages propped open on their beds for passers-by to see. Several former boarding-school students independently recount stories of very unsubtle classmates who burst out with quotations from Chairman Mao in the middle of the night, as if talking in their sleep.

These embarrassing incidents of activism occasionally led to debates among the students. Some students – the minority – argued that the exaggerated emphasis on petty detail was not what devotion to the revolution was all about; to judge people one should look at their willingness to show dedication on the larger issues.¹⁹ The majority, including most of the League members, bristled at this implied criticism and took it as an attack on Lei Feng and Party policy. Their position was that the so-called large issues were revealed in the small details. When such a debate took place, it ranged over the question of whether the League should recruit those who were more independent-minded or those more conformist and more eager to please. The Lei Feng model was used to counter those arguing the former position; he had, after all, aspired to be merely the "docile instrument" and tiny "screw" of the Party.

That argument prevailed, and most of the students happily went along with the activist play-acting. Even among the minority of the students who felt unease, there was no diminution in their adherence to the political ideals they had been taught. In fact, the result of the petty activism was that they yearned all the more for an opportunity to act out their commitment in a genuine manner. It is noteworthy that the several interviewees who had most strongly felt qualms about playing the activist game at school sought later, as Rebel Red Guard

19. At some of the schools early in the Cultural Revolution, many of the children of revolutionary-cadre families joined the middle-class non-League members in supporting this view. Since the cadre youths had the reddest of red family backgrounds, an emphasis upon a person's main aspect rather than the "petty details" of their day-to-day behaviour would serve such youths best of all.

leaders, deliberately to fulfil the activist creed at risk to their own and others' lives. They recall that when the opportunity first came, the feeling of release from the constraints of trivialized activism had been exhilarating.²⁰

When seeking the social origins of the violent student risings and the internecine student warfare of the Cultural Revolution we must, however, look beyond the frustrations of trivialized activism. There were other and more explosive elements to the competition in the classroom. The growing strength of the class line was affecting differently the opportunities of the various categories of students, and these different groupings of students would end up acting out their dedication at each other's expense. In the Cultural Revolution they were to come openly and violently into conflict.

Student Activism and the Class Line

In the years immediately preceding the Cultural Revolution the students who had approached League entry with the greatest anxiety and eagerness were usually those who felt themselves to be borderline cases in terms both of admission to a university and admission to the League. These anxious and strenuously activist students tended to be those with middle-class backgrounds and very good grades.)

Even earlier, in the 1950s, the children of the former middle classes had tried harder on the whole to be activist than had students of other class backgrounds. For one thing, unlike the bad classes they were never directly discriminated against by official policy, and so had not felt deterred from seeking leadership positions in school. In fact, the rather mild political doubts raised by their family background had spurred some of them to vie in school to prove that they personally were as truly red as their better-class schoolmates, and some to prove that they were even more devoted. When it came to gaining activist credentials, these middle-class students, especially those who were academically very good, normally had held certain advantages. Since a successful activist and in particular a League member had to "take the lead" in group situations, he or she needed to have a fair degree of articulateness. Here the middle-class students often had the edge. Moreover, since Youth League members were to serve as models, it was best that they be conscientious in their studies, and preferably successful in them.²¹ Thus it is not entirely surprising that up through

20. This theme and the other themes in this section of the paper are handled in greater depth in Anita Chan: *Children of Mao: A Study of Politically Active Chinese Youths* (forthcoming book).

21. As the Party Secretary at Guangzhou's foremost "key point" high school noted in an address to League members, "If a member's grades aren't good and he's failing exams, even if he enters the League he can't be effective there . . . To study diligently is the struggle-mission of the League." (*Xiaobing* [Little Soldier], a Guangzhou Red Guard newspaper, 9 November 1967.) Also see Tao Zhu's remarks as quoted in the same issue of the newspaper.

1964 many League members had been from the formerly middle-class households. Confident of their academic abilities and of the sincerity of their devotion to the revolution, the brighter of these middle-class youths had tended to have a very high opinion of themselves.

Their rivals at the best categories of secondary school, the children of the political leadership, for their part had been shown deference by nurses and teachers since early childhood. A fair number, especially those from military homes, had been to special boarding primary schools where it had been drummed into them that much was expected of them. When such children entered secondary school, they found themselves caught in ironically unhappy circumstances. Due to their unimpeachable red-family backgrounds they had obtained easier access to the better schools than had other children, yet this meant that a revolutionary cadre youth of above-average scholastic ability had to struggle to keep abreast of the very *best* of the students from middle-class homes. Likewise, a cadre student of below-average academic standing found himself or herself at an above-average school. Rather than endure a low-status position in their new classrooms, they sometimes refused to accept academic achievement as an important criterion for social esteem. Instead they claimed "politics" as the significant standard. But even in terms of "political behaviour" their middle-class schoolmates could perform as well as they and frequently better. Consequently the revolutionary-cadre students often resorted to defining political standing in ascriptive terms – in terms of a "red birth."²²

As if to deny the relevance of academic standing, some of the children of *high*-level cadres deliberately declined to study seriously. They felt increasingly sure of getting into a university on their parents' "red" credentials alone. Thus, even though such youths normally sought to join the League, it was not so much out of ambition for their own futures. Rather, it was to shore up their standing and authority vis-à-vis the other students and to vindicate their contention that activism was a "natural" role for someone of their own origins. Within the League they sometimes formed their own cliques, distancing themselves from other League members. (Subsequently, in the early period of the Cultural Revolution, when these cadre children found better ways of asserting their own authority, they were willing to abandon and sometimes even to turn against the League for being "impure.")

22. As if to emphasize their claims to a superior political status, the military cadres' children developed their own status symbol – the wearing of old army clothes handed down from their fathers. Any other youth who dared wear such garb would have been accused of attempting falsely to associate with the PLA's glorious past. Later during the Cultural Revolution, when the cadre children's monopoly in this wearing of old uniforms broke down, such military clothes became an immediate fashion of the "masses." (On the cadre children's belief in "natural redness" see *Beijing Ribao (Peking Daily)*, 26 November 1964; in *SCMP (Supplement)* No. 133.

In sum, the revolutionary-cadre youths had developed their own grounds for looking down on their middle-class schoolmates, while at the same time resenting those who did well in their studies. They found such classmates unjustifiably "arrogant." The middle-class youths for their part looked down on the cadre youths' second-rate academic records and complained similarly in interviews of the cadre youths' "arrogance."

The cadre children tended to assert superiority vis-à-vis not just the middle-class students but also the worker-peasant children. Though campaigns were beginning in the schools to "learn from the workers and poor and lower-middle peasants," the cadre youths sometimes let it be sensed that old workers and peasants who had been passive beneficiaries of the new order were not in a strong position to provide class education to the children of their liberators. When classrooms were mobilized to go to factories or villages to hear the stories of past sufferings at the hands of exploiters, the cadre youth were reportedly not always the most attentive of listeners.²³ The less than happy relations between many of the revolutionary-cadre children and the worker-peasant youths would later, in the Cultural Revolution, prompt some of the worker-peasant students to desert the Red Guard groups that the revolutionary-cadre students had established.

Since the worker-peasant students in senior high schools had only infrequently been admitted to schools much better than their school-work might have warranted, they had less reason than the revolutionary-cadre youths to feel irritably at odds with their academically capable middle-class schoolmates. But in most other respects the worker-peasant students did find themselves in accord with the revolutionary-cadre students' views. They shared the revolutionary-cadre students' desire to see good-class background rewarded with high formal prestige; similarly they shared the notion that they, more than the middle-class youths, had genuine "class feelings" and hence as a group were politically more advanced.

To the extent that these students found cause to make play of their "class feelings," the *bad*-class youths became caught in a very awkward position. This was especially so during 1963–65 as the official class-line rhetoric strengthened. In the student small-group sessions their activist classmates of good and even middle-class origins had begun persistently to urge them, in tones similar to those of the national media, to join forces with the proletarian cause by "drawing a line" between themselves and their parents. From interviews, it seems that in many cases the advice was sincere. But such episodes highlighted the distinction between the better-class small-group members and the bad-class students.

Some of the bad-class youths did respond positively to the peer-

23. See, e.g., *Zhongxue Luntan*, 11 March 1967, p. 3.

group appeals.²⁴ But most of them developed their own subculture, with their own standards. "If we became red we were degrading ourselves." They had an inner integrity to preserve.²⁵ As a result (many of them reacted to political demands with minimal and passive compliance.)

If they were to some degree good at their schoolwork, they frequently concentrated all their real energies on their academic studies. But the more they worked at their studies and the more they distinguished themselves academically, the more did their successes show up the academic inferiority of the cadres' and workers' children. This invited the antipathy of the red-class students, in particular the cadres' children, who could point to the bad-class high-achievers' indifference to activism as proof that they were in fact "backward elements." During the first phase of the Cultural Revolution, some of these bad-class students found themselves under attack; and one of the charges flung at them – on the face of it, fairly – was that they had striven to be "white experts, not reds."

The schools had always urged students to become both red and expert: on the one side they were to study conscientiously, since the country needed manpower skills; and on the other side they were to strive to absorb the proper attitudes and class stand. But from interviews and Cultural Revolution documentation it is apparent that the different categories of students simply adopted as their own personal views whichever red/expert weighting benefited them most. Bad-class interviewees had held that what counted for the revolution was economic progress; that if given half a chance they could serve the nation better than anyone else, simply by studying hard and becoming experts; and that the shifts after 1962 were all deviations from the proper Party line. Middle-class interviewees, on the other hand, adhered to the official Party interpretation of the mid-1960s: one needs to possess both expertise and redness in order to be truly effective. The good-background students, particularly the revolutionary cadre children, were not only inclined to give greatest significance to "redness." They went further, as the "class line" and "politics" became more

24. One such group of "activist" bad-class youths who later started their own Red Guard group in Beijing put out a newsletter defensively asserting their political devotion: "Thanks to the sarcastic taunting of...writers and the ceaseless prompting of those comrades of 'good intention' in past years, youths of bad family backgrounds are always on guard against their families, and the great majority [*sic*] of them want to draw the line between themselves and their families. They are often subconsciously opposed to what their fathers say. We should have faith in their ability to drag out their fathers when the latter sharpen their knives. We have faith in them because they have also been cultivated for 17 years by the Party like you." (In *SCMP* Supplement No. 183.)

25. The predicaments of a number of bad-class youths are sensitively portrayed in David Raddock: *Political Behaviour of Adolescents in China: The Cultural Revolution in Kwangchow* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977). Almost all of Raddock's interviewees were of distinctly bad-class backgrounds.

important after 1963–64, and began pushing the view that academic success was *contrary* to redness.²⁶ By the eve of the Cultural Revolution, as a middle-class student recalls,

The cadres' kids in my classroom considered those who were good academically as sprouts of revisionism. According to their way of looking at things, success in academic work could influence a person's thought transformation. They weren't satisfied with their own standing; they felt their weak points – their difficulties with the coursework – were the result of oppression."

The cadre youths' interpretation was not to become the official perspective until after the Cultural Revolution, especially in the years of 1968–70.²⁷ However, from 1964 onward the red-family youths did find firmer grounds to press the argument that it was difficult to be absolutely sure of a student's genuine beliefs from mere observations of his surface behaviour. On the one hand they could point out that they themselves had, almost by definition, imbibed true proletarian class feelings as infants and that accordingly their own public show of adherence to the revolution could be taken as genuine. In the League discussions on new applicants, they could imply, on the other hand, that those of bad or petty-bourgeois (middle-class) family background all too often could and did shield opportunistic motives behind activist espousals. In the years after 1963, as many of the students indulged in the types of petty small deeds and hypocritical play-acting which we earlier noted, such an accusation seemed justified. Some good-class students became prone to doubt the intentions of all non-good-class student activists.

The middle-class interviewees, on the contrary, were and still are today convinced that attitudes can be reshaped and that school and society were more influential than parents in a person's character formation. They agreed that there was a deplorable degree of opportunism and play-acting involved in students' efforts to show themselves activist and get into the League. But they believed (correctly, we think) that this resulted from the fact that the League had become an avenue to educational promotion and that the League organization itself had rewarded the bouts of petty conformist posturing. These interviewees suggest that if the middle-class students did tend to exaggerate their petty good deeds slightly more than the red-class League aspirants, this was because League entry was made harder for them. But they consider their own personal credentials and integrity, and their own desire to act on behalf of the higher cause, to have been as great as

26. The press disapprovingly cited some of the slogans they allegedly devised: "Now the primary question is one of revolution, not of studying"; "The more you study, the deeper the influence of capitalist ideology"; "If you study poorly, then and only then are you red"; etc. (*China Youth*, No. 8, 16 April 1965, pp. 12–13; also Shanghai's *Wen Hui Bao*, 3 June 1965, p. 4).

27. Jonathan Unger, *Education Under Mao: A Study of Canton Schools 1960–1980* (Columbia University Press, forthcoming), Chapters 7 and 9.

any other student's – greater, indeed, than those of what they considered to be their pompous soft-living revolutionary-cadre classmates.

After 1963 these middle-class students were finding it progressively harder to enter the League. It was not just a matter of their performance not being believed, but rather that “performance” *per se* did not count entirely in determining admission. The official criteria for political merit tended to vary with the times. When the educational authorities had been pursuing scholastic achievements in the early 1960s, for example, a student's success in studying had been taken as a measure of his or her political progressiveness. Now with the swing of the pendulum “political performance” *per se* was giving way to family origin. [In support of the strengthened class-line, directives in 1964 from the higher echelons of the League had made clear that more good-background candidates ought to be recruited] and even the League members of middle-class origins had obediently hurried to “cultivate” more red-background classmates. The following table drawn from questionnaire recollections lends support to the impressions given by the official documentation of the mid-1960s: that a near-majority of the “veteran” League members, who had joined in junior high school, were of non-red-class origin, while the new recruits had predominantly good-class credentials. Moreover, within the League itself the non-pure-class members were increasingly being displaced in the branches' leadership positions by the good-class members: mostly by revolutionary-cadre students in the best schools and worker-peasant students in the average senior highs.

Table 3: The Changing Patterns of New League Enrolments, 1962–65 *
(Based on questionnaire recollections)

<i>New Enrollees, by year</i>	<i>1962–63</i>	<i>1963–64</i>	<i>1964–65</i>
Revolutionary cadre	30%	32%	38%
Working class	24%	26%	38%
Middle class	37%	34%	21%
Bad class and overseas			
Chinese	9%	8%	3%
	100%	100%	100%

* The figures for the 1965–66 school year are incomplete, since the spring term was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution. The figures we gathered suggest, though, that higher percentages of middle- and bad-class students were again getting into the League in 1965–66.

This trend was hurting the non-red-class students' chances of getting into a university. It was denying them recognition of their political integrity. They felt taken aback, but not quite sure what to do about

it. Because they believed in the Party, Mao and the political system, they could not go against the national class-line policies that were hurting their own interests. They [could only direct their discontent (privately, among themselves) against the members of the League branch and the good-class students who were increasingly dominating it.]

In 1965-66 the League's national leaders applied brakes to these League enrolment trends. They had become mildly disturbed by the growing dissatisfaction and frustrations of the middle-class students. They had also become aware that the bad-class students were being pushed back into the arms of their parents.²⁸ In a new line proclaimed to a National Student Congress in January 1965 by the mayor of Beijing, Peng Zhen, the national level of the League now decided to reverse itself.)

Inasmuch as the Party, in dealing with young people with different family origins and experience, *attaches importance to their performance*, those who resolutely follow the Party will not lose their bearings but will have a bright future.²⁹

In the months which followed, actual performance rather than "class origins" was again intended to become the major criterion for League admissions, in a new "emphasize performance" movement.³⁰

To encourage the non-red-class students, the Party provided a new hero alongside Lei Feng. Lei Feng had been an orphan of poor-peasant birth, and good-class youths had been able to cite him as an exemplary case to support their own claims that redness sprang from origins. The middle-class youths had not only been hampered by this play upon class, but also had difficulty relating their own reasons for activism to Lei Feng's "gratitude." Moreover, Lei Feng had been *successful* in his own lifetime as an activist. He had been admitted to the Party, had become a nationally publicized model soldier, and as such had been selected to attend a National People's Congress. Young people who were discouraged and filled with self-doubts over their lack of activist recognition could not readily look to the simple-minded and all-too-successful Lei Feng as a guide on how to cope with their own predicaments.

They were now introduced to the soldier Wang Jie, a hero of middle-class (middle-peasant) origins. Like themselves, Wang Jie had never personally suffered. But he had been genuinely moved by the tales of good-class fellow soldiers and had taken the activist road. He had tried to enter the Party, yet was rebuffed. He had harboured self-

28. *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth News), 18 September 1965. Also see *China Youth News*, June 3 1965 (SCMP 3478).

29. *Renmin Ribao*, 31 January 1965; in SCMP 3395.

30. In 1965, a large number of essays and readers' letters in *China Youth Monthly* reiterated this point. See James Townsend: "Revolutionizing Chinese Youth: A Study of *Chung-kuo Ch'ing-nien*," in A. Doak Barnett (ed.), *Chinese Communist Politics in Action* (University of Washington Press, 1969).

doubts. He had blamed some of his disappointments upon his classification as a middle peasant.³¹ But he had proven his dedication in the summer of 1965 in the grandest way possible. To save others' lives, he had hurled himself on an accidentally released grenade. The martyr's diary appeared in bookstores in November 1965 and 30 million copies were sold within two months: he was the only model hero of the sixties who came near to rivalling Lei Feng in popularity. There was now one hero for those of good backgrounds and another for those who were number two and needed to try harder.³²

The genie of "class" had not been stuffed safely back into the bottle, though. The middle-class students may have had their hopes raised by the "emphasize performance" campaign, but they still felt rather anxious over their status and defensive over the questioning of their revolutionary integrity. At the same time, the new official sympathy for them did not sit well with their good-class schoolmates. As the class line in other spheres of life was still being stressed, the red-origin students felt justified in resisting the new national League policy. In classrooms where they had come to dominate the League, they often continued to lay a very strong stress on "class" in selecting new members. In some cases this posture seems to have had the tacit support of school officials and teachers of good-class blood, who were themselves suspicious of the integrity of the middle- and bad-class activists. In other cases, classroom teachers who supported an increase in middle- and bad-class enrolments found themselves at loggerheads with their classroom's League branch, which by senior high school was no longer under the teachers' strong influence. The animosities and tacit alliances generated during this period between school administrators, teachers, and different constellations of students would soon take more violent shape. School officials and teachers who had taken either side in the issue were to find themselves the targets in the Cultural Revolution of aggrieved students.

In short, in the months before the Cultural Revolution erupted the schools and students were caught in tense and uncertain circumstances. The signals from above had been changing, and the students' present statuses and future prospects were at stake. If anything, the "emphasize performance" movement had served only to put some of the red-origin students on the defensive.

On the eve of the Cultural Revolution the classrooms were divided in diverse ways: "veteran" League members from the newer red-origin contingent; the League members as a whole from non-League members; the unsuccessful rivals for the League from the non-activists;

31. *The Diary of Wang Jie* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967). For Wang Jie's comments on his class background, see especially p. 59 and pp. 81-82.

32. e.g. even later, during the Cultural Revolution, a pronouncement by a Red Guard group composed of non-good-origin young people argued "Nobody can say that Wang Jie's glory was below that of Lei Feng." ("Origin Theory," translated in D. Gordon White: *The Politics of Class and Class Origin*, p. 81.)

the academically good students from those poor in their studies. Most importantly, the [class line was pushing students into four increasingly self-aware groupings with opposing interests: the cadres' children; the worker-peasant children; the middle-class children; and the bad-class background children.]

Part II: The Emergence of Red Guard Factionalism

The arrival of the Cultural Revolution in the spring of 1966 provided a political platform for the continuation and intensification of these divisions in the student body. Our object will be to understand how, in the first nine months of the Cultural Revolution, the high school student body in Guangzhou became transformed into two armed political camps, each intent upon suppressing the other. We shall be observing "class" warfare in the disguise of a children's crusade.

The Opening Rounds

In that early spring of 1966, the high schools of Guangzhou had been [asked to show support for a campaign that Mao had launched against two of his Party critics, the playwright Wu Han and the Beijing editor Deng Tuo.] Urgent speeches were delivered by the school principals. Editorials criticizing the Beijing literary circle as anti-Party were read and "studied" in classes and meetings. Students were urged to write essays and big-character posters denouncing the "representatives of the bourgeoisie who have wormed their way into the Party."

The students responded with enthusiasm. The tone of the campaign suggested to them that there was a split in the top Party hierarchy and that Chairman Mao was somehow threatened. In response to the mounting pressures of the past several years to be activist, many of them were especially eager to prove their dedication. In that spring of 1966 they were not sure what the issues were. But if there had been too few small deeds to go around in the Lei Feng campaign, now there were to be more than enough.

Preparation for final course exams and for the senior-high and university selection examinations still commanded much of the students' attention in the first month of Cultural Revolution activity. But especially at the key-point schools, students found the spare time to scribble enormous numbers of denunciatory posters, with the wording copied almost verbatim from newspaper essays. In some of the schools posters were soon pasted from floor to ceiling, and when the students ran out of space they stuck new posters on the old ones. It became a frenetic activist competition between informally organized small groups to see who could produce the greatest quantity. Under the League branches' guidance, the normal classroom peer-group pressures to "perform actively" were still fully in operation. Several interviewees took the

opportunity, now that they had activist achievements to show, to apply to join the League.

By mid-May, though, with their classes suspended and the repetitive copying a full-time occupation, boredom began to set in. Trapped in activities that had become increasingly trivialized over the weeks, the students were eager for the new and ill-understood campaign to move on to a phase that demanded more direct action. On 1 June a big-character poster by a philosophy teacher, Nie Yuanzi, was publicized at Beijing University,³³ and was hailed almost immediately by Chairman Mao. The poster attacked Beijing University's administration. Within days, some of the revolutionary-cadre students at Guangzhou's most prestigious school, having heard of these events through their parents, pasted up their own declarations against teachers and the school authorities. Since their parents were of considerably higher political status than even their school's Party head, they were not overawed by the authority of the teachers and the school head. (By moving against the teachers, and in a few cases against the school's Party committee, they took over the leadership of the student body, nudging the Youth League aside.) As news of the new wall posters spread to the neighbourhood high schools, these too quickly became plastered with big-character posters criticizing teachers.

(With their academic classes dismissed, a good political performance seemed more important than ever before to those students who were politically competitive – and the new twist to the campaign was opening up good opportunities for them to demonstrate their activism. Students began vying to think of faults with which to tag teachers. As one interviewee sheepishly admits: "I and my friends were really ingenious in exposing teachers. We'd drag a teacher out first and then cook up some faults for him." Students began criticizing teachers for not emphasizing politics or the thought of Mao Zedong enough, for laziness in labour, for their style of clothes, or any slips of the tongue they might ever have made.

In laying such charges, some of these students felt exhilaratingly liberated from the confines of petty activism. Yet the students were not "rebellious" *per se*. They were trying to show their adherence to the highest political authorities – above all Chairman Mao – by attacking people whom they believed had been placed by the campaign in a politically disgraced category. In short, the students were still locked into an activist competition with classmates and were eager to conform to the demands of the new campaign.

At the same time, however, the campaign was providing them with new opportunities to air the tensions and grievances from previous years of competition. In particular, some of the good-class students were finding it easier to pursue "class line" arguments. The mayor of

33. For the contents of Nie's poster see *Renmin Ribao*, 2 June 1966; translated into English in *SCMP*, No. 3719 (16 June 1966).

Beijing, Peng Zhen, and the Beijing Party and Youth League Committees had just been toppled by Mao's widening campaign, and the red-class students in Guangzhou began using this as a pretext to attack in wall posters the "emphasize performance" position with which Peng Zhen had been publicly identified. In their attacks against teachers, they argued with increasing vehemence that the teachers had placed undue stress upon examination results; that they had shown unconcealed preference for the middle- and bad-class students who did well scholastically; that they had not been sufficiently concerned with the children of cadres, workers and peasants; that many of the older teachers had a "bad-class nature."

In most schools the Party committees encouraged this emphasis on the "class" issue. They had observed that a few of the Party committees at the best schools had become targets of high-level cadre children's wall-posters, and they were apparently worried their own turn might come. A Central Committee directive of 16 May, pushed through by Mao, had already contained disturbing intimations that the campaign nationally might move not only against bad-class "reactionaries" but also against sections of the Party.³⁴ In such circumstances, even the Guangdong Party leadership felt it wise to keep student attention fixed on "class struggle" against bad-class teachers. Hence, when the Party secretary of one junior high school tried in early June to protect his school's bad-class teachers from threats and physical assault, and students from the school went to the municipal Education Bureau to complain, the school head became the object of a Guangzhou Party Committee censure and official city-wide ridicule and abuse.³⁵

The cadre children wanted to turn this heightened play upon "class" more directly to their own interests. In early June, following again the lead of the cadre children in Beijing, the cadre students at Guangzhou's most prestigious high school, South China Attached Middle, began circulating petitions among their classmates urging that the senior high school and university entrance examinations be abolished and that alternative recruitment procedures more favourable to good-class students be established. As might be expected, few of the school's middle-class students could be persuaded to sign, and some staged a walk-out in protest. But within a fortnight the proposal became official national policy. The (middle-class students' chances for a university education had all but evaporated. A Central Committee decision of 13 June, put through by Mao, explained:

Beginning this year, a new method of enrolment, a combination of recommendation and selection in which proletarian politics are right to the fore

34. The 16 May directive has been translated in *Current Background (CB)*, No. 852 (6 May 1968).

35. *Nanfang Ribao*, Guangzhou (19 June 1966); also see a Canton Radio broadcast in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service: China Daily Report (FBIS)* (22 June 1966), p. DDD 3.

... will go into effect. ... The old examination system for enrolling students is most dangerous and harmful to the socialist cause. It placed not proletarian but bourgeois politics in command. This system is a serious violation of the Party's class line. It shuts out many outstanding children of [pre-liberation] workers, [former] poor and lower-middle peasants, revolutionary cadres, revolutionary armymen, and revolutionary martyrs and opens the gates wide to the bourgeoisie to cultivate its own successors.³⁶

Once this directive had been announced, however, it caused little stir among the middle-class origin students. They were caught up in June and July in efforts to prove that they too were dedicated to Mao's line and that they too had "class feelings." The incidents of hypocrisy and petty opportunism of previous years lent added impetus to their attempts now to demonstrate that they themselves were neither opportunists nor careerists. Once the elimination of exams had been laid down by Mao as official policy, they were in no position to admit openly that they were against it. Rather than contest the issue, they simply refused to recognize it as an important question in the Cultural Revolution. By mid-summer, differences over examinations and educational priorities therefore dropped almost entirely from sight as a point of overt contention between students.³⁷

Under the Workteams

Workteams of Party cadres had begun entering the schools in mid-June, under the direction of Liu Shaoqi, to guide and control the campaign among students. The workteams took control of the schools, and often the school Party committees were made to "stand aside." Initially, the workteams turned to the League branches for detailed information on the student bodies and on the movement in the schools.³⁸ But like the city-wide and school Party committees, the workteams were intent on directing the movement along "class" lines, and they also sought out students of good class origins to act as their closest aides.

36. *Renmin Ribao* (18 June 1966).

37. More than a year later, in the autumn of 1967, some of the good-class students temporarily revived the issue. They did so during a period when the Party centre in Beijing was attempting to dampen the students' activities in the streets and get them re-orientated once more towards their own schools. In such circumstances these good-class children had perceived that renewed discussion on educational policies would enable them to regain the initiative they had earlier lost to the middle-class-led Rebel Red Guards. On this see Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 306-8. For greater detail, see Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism in China's Cultural Revolution: a Social Analysis of Guangzhou* (Westview Press, forthcoming), Chap. 6.

38. Nationwide the League felt it was gaining new responsibilities due to the campaign. The League Central Committee decided to start publishing *China Youth News* daily rather than thrice weekly starting 1 August. (*Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, 25 July 1966; in *SCMP*, No. 3754.)

This pattern of relying on the good classes varied at different types of schools. In the elite schools, where there were significant numbers of students of revolutionary-cadre origin, the good-class students generally were given the prerogatives of leadership in the "Preparatory Committees" that the workteams set up to lead each classroom.³⁹ In these schools the middle-class activists usually found themselves excluded. But in the non-elite junior high schools the workteams discovered that few of the working-class students were politically activist. Thus in such schools they sometimes had to give continued leadership opportunities to middle-class League members.

The workteams insisted upon a more orderly programme of "struggle." Instead of allowing the students to attack teachers and school authorities indiscriminately, the cadre workteams narrowed the scope of attack to selected teachers, mostly older and of bad-class background. But even some Party secretaries and other school administrators became targets, among other things for not having held to an adequately firm "proletarian class stand." At many of the schools, moreover, it was under the workteams' auspices that the attacks upon teachers for the first time turned ugly. "Cow-sheds" – make-shift prisons – were set up, and during the day the targeted bad-class teachers were dragged out to do heavy or menial work and to attend struggle-meetings at which they were criticized and beaten. As we saw in Part I, the students had been warned for years in the youth magazines that their generation might be "soft" and might not be able to deal with the "enemy" when it appeared. The abuse and violence mounted as students vied to show their activist devotion.

They felt they were part of a grand drama, made all the grander by the revolutionary violence. Some were chagrined that particular teachers whom they personally liked were under attack, and some shrank uncomfortably with a sense of awe and distaste from the incidents of student brutality. But few felt pity for the targets. In the red and white worldview the students had learned as children, such teachers had been placed beyond the pale, no longer "people." They were characterized as non-human "freaks and demons." In the intense atmosphere of "class struggle," moreover, many of the middle-class and bad-class children were under pressure to show their "class stand," and it was far better to be able to do so by "drawing a line" between themselves and already discredited teachers than to have to make criticisms of their own family upbringing.

39. In Beijing, where many of the revolutionary-cadre children had inside information that there were splits within the ranks of the top Party leadership, some of them went against the workteams. In such cases, the workteams found it wisest to define the "reliability" of a student not so much in terms of family origins but rather in terms of a student's support for the workteam. In such schools, middle-class origin students who were enthusiastically willing to back the workteams were permitted into the Preparatory Committees. (In Guangzhou, several of the high-level cadre children in at least two of the elite schools similarly went against the workteams.)

If the middle-class students at the better schools felt increasingly frustrated about the attacks on these teachers, it was largely because the good-class students but not themselves were being permitted to express fully their political vigilance and activism. "In my own school," recalls one, "we didn't beat those teachers very much. Maltreatment definitely existed, but only a comparatively small sector of the students were permitted to mete out such maltreatment. Those duties were regarded as very glorious. The ghosts and demons were guarded and controlled only by people of good class origins."⁴⁰

Some of the middle-class students were resentful: "I felt the workteam was no good. They relied on the high-level cadre kids, and we were made to feel low class." Such students wanted their fair share at defending Chairman Mao's line, and felt the authorities above them – the Party workteams – were blocking them. Yet the great majority of these middle-class youths were in no respect ready to rebel against the workteams. The students might have destroyed the aura of authority of the teachers and in some cases their principals, but the workteam remained sacred. To be anti-workteam was to be anti-Party, and to be anti-Party was to be counter-revolutionary. . . . But then word filtered down in early August that the workteams' legitimacy had been thrown into dispute.⁴¹

The workteams had been sent into the educational institutions while Mao was away from Beijing. When he returned to the capital at the end of July he criticized the workteams for restraining the campaign⁴² and had them ordered out of all the schools. Mao was changing the rules of the game. The function of the workteams in political campaigns has normally been to keep the thrust of the campaigns in the local units under strict higher-level controls. Dragging out people of bad-class background for the "masses" to criticize has often been the initial stage of such workteam campaigns, on the ideological grounds that "class struggle" should always be waged against the former exploiting classes. Strategically the purpose was to drum up passions *under* the Party's central leadership. Mao was now overriding the Party's established concept of "class struggle" and introducing a new dimension. It was because he was not just after "scholar tyrants" and "bourgeois academics" but also conservatized Party leaders. The students watching the workteams pulling out of the schools were not yet aware of this. But they got an initial hint when Mao pushed his *Sixteen Articles* through the Central Committee and had the document

40. This interviewee, in trying to explain why the teachers were locked up, reveals the naïve worldview of teenagers at that time: "The teachers with problems were treated as class enemies. They had to be guarded at night to make sure they didn't sneak out to commit sabotage. They'd suddenly been regarded as people who might commit sabotage at any and every moment."

41. The Beijing order withdrawing the workteams is contained in *Current Background*, No. 852, p. 8.

42. *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui* (1969), pp. 643–50.

released on 8 August. The students' activities were no longer to be orchestrated by adult organs of authority. The Sixteen Articles declared that

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, it is the masses [at this juncture meaning students] who must liberate themselves. We cannot do the things for them which they should do for themselves. We must trust the masses, rely on them and respect their creative spirit. . . . We must not be afraid of disorder.⁴³

But how were the students to use their "creative spirit"? Article 5 of the Sixteen Articles noted that "The main targets of the present movement are those in authority in the Party who are taking the capitalist road." But Article 10 reiterated that "The domination of our schools by bourgeois intellectuals must be completely changed."

Different students wanted to emphasize one part of the document or the other. Some of the middle-class students averred that they too were part of the "masses" and had to be permitted to participate freely in the campaign. A few even claimed to see the thrust of the campaign shifting away from issues promoting a strong "class line" and towards the punishment of errant Party personnel. Equally, the good-class children could interpret the Sixteen Articles as backing their own continued attacks on "bourgeois intellectuals" in the schools. In view of the string of recent Party pronouncements supporting a strong class line (as in the recent decrees abolishing the university entrance examinations), the students of good class origins were well-placed to see their own interpretation prevail. It was they who had most to gain from the "liberation" of the mass movement.

At a majority of the senior high schools the good-class students had already moved into the positions of student-body leadership, and as the workteams withdrew the departing cadres were able to hand over the reins of control to them: in particular to the cadre children. Most of the other students accepted the transfer, but with a measure of resentment. Political power at the schools was now in the hands of fellow students with whom they had felt directly competitive or antagonistic and not of adult figures with unchallengeable credentials.

The revolutionary-cadre students were turning towards stronger class-line arguments to justify their new ascendancy and to win other good-class students to their side. In late July they had begun circulating a couplet proclaiming the inheritability of political reliability:

When the father's a hero, the son's a manly fellow,
When the father's a reactionary, the son's a bastard.

The couplet had arrived in Guangzhou in the company of high-level cadre children from Beijing who were fanning out into the provinces to propagate a new dogma of class purity. At first, debates on the couplet were relatively open at Guangzhou's schools: sometimes even

43. In *Current Background*, No. 852.

students of bad-class origins, if sufficiently brave, were free to speak their minds. But not for long. The credo represented by the couplet encouraged intolerance of anyone of less pure background. In fact, for good measure some of the good-class young people were adding the middle-class students to their couplet in a third and unflattering line:

If the father's ordinary the son is a fence-straddler.

From now on, the revolutionary-cadre children argued, only those of the finest blood should be permitted to lead.

The Good-class Red Guards

Mao himself seemed to be giving the stamp of approval to the good-origin students' claims to exclusive student leadership. In early August, high-level revolutionary-cadre children at several of Beijing's most famous key-point secondary schools had put together their own youth groups, whose memberships were based upon young people of "pure" class origins. They called their little organizations the Red Guards. On 18 August Mao reviewed a massive rally of good-class students, and a *People's Daily* photograph of the event pointedly showed the Chairman accepting a Red Guard armband.⁴⁴

Within days the title and the concept had been taken up by the revolutionary-cadre youths of other cities. These new student groups provided a means to bypass and repudiate the Youth League, where "performance" had counted heavily and where power and prestige had to be shared with non-good-origin classmates. With the formation of Red Guard groups, the vestiges of the League's power in the schools collapsed. The frame of reference which some of the good-class students had formed even prior to the Cultural Revolution – family origins should count for everything – was to find extreme expression in this new Red Guard movement. With Mao's apparent approval, it was difficult for the other students to discover secure grounds for objecting. In all the schools where the middle-class League members had been permitted on to the Preparatory Committees (as in some of the poorer senior high schools and the neighbourhood junior highs), they got pushed off when the Red Guards were formed.⁴⁵

The new Red Guards' views were best articulated by a university student named Tan Lifu, the son of a deceased high-level cadre, who

44. A New China News Agency report of the ceremony described the Red Guards as "an organization established by secondary-school students from families of workers (former) poor and lower-middle peasants, revolutionary cadres and revolutionary army men." *NCNA* (18 August 1966); in *SCMP*, No. 3766 (23 August 1966). Also see D. Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Paper No. 9, Contemporary China Centre, Australian National University, 1976).

45. *China Youth Daily*, the newspaper of the League, ceased publication 20 August 1966, for the duration of the Cultural Revolution and beyond.

delivered a speech in late August elevating the concept of a "blood line" to the level of an ideological principle. Only those of the purest revolutionary blood were to be trusted in this hour of crisis, Tan warned; all others had to be kept at arm's length in distinctly subordinate roles.⁴⁶

A new caste system was established on this basis by the revolutionary-cadre children who controlled the Red Guards at the key-point schools. At all school meetings, the seating arrangements were segregated physically into three sections: at the front sat those of pure-class origins, behind them those of middle-class origins, and at the rear those of bad-class origins. Moreover, within the ranks of the new Red Guards themselves there developed a strictly defined pecking order; the children of high PLA cadres first, then the sons and daughters of factory and administrative Party men, followed by worker and finally good-class peasant-origin youths at the organization's base. In some schools, the high-level cadre youngsters wore arm-bands of special silk cloth prohibited to lesser-born Red Guard colleagues. Among these high-level cadre children, those whose parents were Northerners (usually military personnel) touted themselves as the purest of the pure.

Obsessed with the notion that parental rank should determine the offspring's political status, the cadres' children insisted that even some of the working-class children "prove" the legitimacy of their officially designated proletarian origins. A fair number of the working-class students suddenly found that parents who had been coolies or artisans were not really entitled to be labelled as "proletarian." In what was called "investigating into three generations," the Red Guard purists sometimes went so far as to demand a check on the occupation of a student's grandfather before they were convinced the student in question was of a true worker-class origin. This ploy could be especially effective in maintaining control over an organization. Even after becoming Red Guards, those who posed a threat to the leadership of the cadre children might find their class status unofficially reclassified. In a city like Guangzhou, historically a commercial city which before liberation had had relatively few genuine industrial workers, the cadre children's narrow interpretations of "proletarian" purity would soon cost them dearly in terms of support from children who all along had proudly proclaimed their working-class origins.

Students of middle-class background were not, of course, permitted into the newly formed Red Guards. But in many schools a subordinate organization called the Red Outer Circle (*Hong-wai-wei*) was set up for them and for the impure working-class students. The Red Guards avowed that through loyal performance some of the Red Outer Circle

46. Tan Lifu declaimed: "After seven or eight struggles, if you've transformed your thought, then we can have unity. First there must be isolation, to see if unity is possible. . . ." Quoted in *Tan Lifu Jianghua Zhuze*, a pamphlet published 16 October 1966 by Red Guards at Beijing Industrial University who were opposed to Tan's views.

members might later be awarded membership in the parent Red Guard organization. Hence, despite the second-class status of the Red Outer Circle, many students sought to join. It was their only remaining way to show their activism and support for Mao through an officially sanctioned organization.

An opportunity to show their adherence to the new political order came almost immediately in the "Destroy the Four Olds" movement of late August and early September. The aim was to "destroy old ideology, culture, habits and customs." Zealous Red Guards with Outer Circle members tagging along to show activism approached Street Committees for the lists of bad-class households and carted away furniture and books to burn. But the middle-class participants were trapped in uncomfortable circumstances. The objects they were confiscating were rather similar to the items in their own homes. The more they treated as contraband the bourgeois relics of bad-class homes, the more they themselves seemed tainted. The "Destroy the Four Olds" movement was being made use of by the good-class students to stress further the impurity of "bourgeois" households and further to lower the esteem of the middle-class students.

The good-class youths grandiosely titled their activities during September 1966 the "Red Terror." Until then, the students of bad-class origins had largely been spared from attack in Guangzhou. Only the bad-class teachers had been abused. But good-class student emissaries from Beijing had brought word that in the capital's schools the cadre children had already begun turning violently against the students of enemy-class families.⁴⁷ Having based their new organization upon the premise that inherited class feelings counted for all in determining youths' attitudes, it now seemed reasonable to the Red Guards in Guangzhou that an irredeemable "original sin" marked classmates from bad-class homes. The red-class students already felt a diffuse antagonism towards such classmates, generated by frustrations with their own course work and their annoyance that the bad-class students did so well. In the good-class students' quickening search for "class enemies," the bad-class young people came to hand as hidden demons. They were compelled to enter school from a special gate. One interviewee had half her hair shaven off in what was called a "yin-yang head." Some of the "freak and demon" students and teachers were the targets for severe beatings by frenzied good-class students eager to prove the severity of their own "proletarian class stand." Usually it was in the junior high schools and especially those where the high-

47. Students of one Beijing high school also suggested that the "five bad elements" and their children be dealt with in ways not dissimilar to *apartheid* in South Africa: e.g. deny them all urban public services and drive many of them out of the capital into the countryside. (See D. Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin*, pp. 45-6). By year's end, a great many bad-class residents had, in fact, been exiled to the countryside. As late as 1978, some were petitioning Beijing to return to their urban homes.

level cadres' children were concentrated that the worst reported outrages occurred.

The children of high-ranking cadres were the most violent of all the good-class students for two reasons. First, by the logic of their own "blood-line theory" they were supposed to be the most revolutionary; and so they felt it important to show more "class hatred" than any of the other students. Second, their parents' political positions afforded them protection, and many of them apparently felt they did not need to worry about the consequences of their actions. Generally speaking, students from working-class backgrounds were reportedly milder than those of cadre origin in their treatment of bad-class students and teachers; those of civilian cadre origins were milder than those of military origin; finally, those from Guangzhou were milder than those whose parents were Northerners.

The severe treatment meted out to the children of the bad-class categories served as a buffer allowing the students from middle-class origins to avoid becoming targets for abuse. But many of them were forced to make abject self-criticisms. In a youth culture in which conformity was stressed and in which activism was an essential goal of the state-sponsored socialization process and a near-necessity for upward mobility,⁴⁸ the abrupt denial of their activism and the public impugning and ridiculing of their motives were traumatic experiences for some of these middle-class young people.

Some of the more independent-minded of the middle-class students, however, had chafed from the start at the control exercised by the cadre children and had declined to apply to join the Red Outer Circle. Refusing to be cowed, they engaged in discussions among themselves and, if enterprising enough, investigated somewhat surreptitiously what was occurring elsewhere in the city. At the local universities they saw wall-posters attacking the blood-line theory, copied from posters at Beijing's universities. They returned from these local forays more self-confident and sometimes ready to challenge the more extreme interpretations of the "blood line." At some schools, the bravest even banded together in small beleaguered groups called "minority factions."

The Red Guards, though, had been put in a strong position to dispense favours and mete out punishments to reinforce their control. Recognizing the potential strength of the Red Guard movement, the Guangzhou Municipal Committee and the Guangzhou Military Regional Command had begun guaranteeing the Red Guards material support in the form of money, vehicles, printing facilities, railway tickets to Beijing to attend the great rallies at Tiananmen Square, etc.⁴⁹ At some schools students who tried to set up "minority fac-

48. On this, see Anita Chan: *Children of Mao: A Study of Politically Active Chinese Youths* (forthcoming book).

49. *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, No. 24, p. 339.

tions" could not even obtain meal tickets until they repented and submitted reports acknowledging their own inferior class standing.

Mao and the Rise of the Rebel Red Guards

The blood-line theory's extreme interpretation of "class" received at least a fair measure of high-level Party approval. Leaders such as Tao Zhu and Tan Zhenlin apparently regarded the "blood line" proposals as an assurance that rather than having the "spears pointed upward" in this campaign towards members of the leadership, the spears would be deflected downwards towards bad-class teachers and students. They must have seen too that defining "redness" in class terms, with "revolutionary cadres" as the reddest of all, strengthened their own legitimacy. And they knew that the sons and daughters of the "revolutionary cadres" would not be so likely to turn the campaign against the middle and higher levels of the Party. To do so would be to endanger their own parents and to undermine their own claims of superiority. In fact, Tan Lifu's famous August speech had contained a general defence of high-level Party cadres.

But by autumn, for the very same reasons, Mao and the radicals were beginning to turn against the activities of the Red Guards. The Party leftists had no inherent objection to a "class struggle" campaign, and on educational issues, as we have seen, Mao was a supporter of a stronger class line. But even though he seemed initially to have been satisfied to put the leadership of the campaign in the schools into the hands of good-class-origin youngsters, Mao apparently had not expected that these good-class children would use the campaign primarily to erect a rigid caste system favouring themselves, or that the campaign would become altogether stuck in the groove of attacking bad-class enemies.

Mao had come to believe by the mid-1960s that the greatest immediate danger to his political vision lay with the new Party bureaucracy rather than the old bourgeois classes. Thus he and his followers in the leadership had decided by the late summer and early autumn of 1966 that they would have to rewrite the script for the campaign. They were ready to make use of any groups of students, class background notwithstanding, who were willing to hit out at Party "capitalist roaders."

The Rebel Red Guards were later to trace their "liberation" to the early days of October 1966. Lin Biao's National Day speech of 1 October, a *Red Flag* editorial of 3 October, and a Beijing rally attended on 6 October by Zhou Enlai and Jiang Qing all directed that henceforth the campaign was to concentrate on the "bourgeois reactionary line of power-holders in the Party." Jiang Qing's reformulation of the class line was to become the official leadership policy by November:

To judge a person you must first look at him from the class viewpoint. This is an essential question. But second, we must not overstress class origin. . . . Third, put the stress on to political-ideological and not superficial performance.⁵⁰

The "emphasize performance" theme had been revived.

At the same time, however, Mao and his radical followers in the leadership did not repudiate all the good-background students who had led the movement in the schools up till then. Mao was not even opting to drop entirely the theme of "class struggle." But at least for the time being the "class" terminology was to be taken as a metaphor for political stances, and the targets were to be Party "capitalist roaders" rather than "capitalists," and "representatives of the bourgeoisie in the Party" rather than actual members of the former bourgeoisie. It was this which for the first time offered the middle-class children their opportunity to assert that they, and not the revolutionary-cadre children, were the true standard-bearers of Chairman Mao's line.

By the late autumn of 1966, the middle-class students who had organized themselves into the small beleaguered "minority factions" were no longer outcasts. They appealed directly to the members of the Red Outer Circle who resented the subordinate status to which the red-class children had relegated them. Faced with large-scale defections, the Red Guards, having earlier tried to restrict travelling privileges to their own good-class members, reversed gears and began encouraging everyone to leave on "great link-ups" to Beijing and other cities. But these extended journeys from school into the wider society served only to undermine the remaining influence of the Red Guard units. Travelling in small groups and meeting students of their own circumstances and backgrounds from other parts of the country, the middle-class and even working-class students had a chance to vent their feelings in discussions and to begin defining themselves more on their own terms.

When they drifted back to their schools in late December and early January they formed their own independent Red Guard units, often using as a core the members of the initial "minority faction" at their school. These growing nuclei subsequently became the "Rebel" Red Guards. The successors of the initial pure-class-origin Red Guard corps became known colloquially as the "Conservative" or "Loyalist" Red Guards.

Taking Sides

By mid-1967 most of the students were aligned to one or the other of these two Red Guard camps. The earlier and recent passions and

50. *Current Background*, No. 830 (26 June 1967), pp. 24-5. See also D. Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin*, p. 33.

interests found expression in violent factionalism. And this conflict, as Table 4 confirms, was distinctly a case of "class" warfare.

Table 4: The "Class" Composition of Guangzhou's Two Red Guard Factions

(size of sample: 50 classrooms)

	<i>Red-class</i>	<i>Middle- and bad-class</i>	<i>Total</i>
East Wind Red Guards (Loyalists)	81%	19%	100%
Red Flag Red Guards (Rebels)	26%	74%	100%

Table 5, below, shows in more precise terms how each of the "class" categories in the student body divided. As expected, a major source of "loyalist" support in the secondary schools came from among the students of revolutionary-cadre origin, while the basis of "rebel" strength came from "intelligentsia" households.

We can see, too, that the children of bad-class origins were overwhelmingly non-participants. Their parents had taught them to avoid political controversy, and the "Red Terror" which they had recently survived reaffirmed their need for caution. As shown in Table 5, most of these students simply spent the Cultural Revolution years in the safety of their homes. The small minority among them who participated were not usually welcomed. The mixed-class composition of the Rebels already put the Rebels at risk of being called dupes of "rightists turning the sky upside down" or of "class enemies seeking revenge." Thus in a number of schools the leaders of Rebel units only encouraged the participation of bad-class youths when outbreaks of fighting put them in need of a larger massed following. Those bad-class youths who did join the fighting almost invariably participated on the Rebel side.⁵¹

Significantly, the children of working-class origins comprised the only group that divided rather evenly. Both factions sought them out. The cadre children tried appealing to them as fellow "red-class" students who should see their interests and ideals in that light. The Rebels contrarily pictured their own faction as consisting primarily of "children of the labouring people," opposed to a "special privilege faction" made up of the cadre stratum. In this tug-of-war for the

51. The only partial exception to this was presented by the students of Overseas Merchant background, some of whom before the Cultural Revolution had labelled themselves children of Overseas Chinese labourers. During the periods of 1967 when both factions were in need of manpower the Loyalist Red Guards were willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Table 5: **Red Guard Alignments, by Class Origins ***

(Size of sample: 50 classrooms)

	Factional alignments of students			
Official class label of father	Red Flag (Rebels)	East Wind (Loyalists)	Non-participant	No. of students
<i>Red-Class Family Background</i>				
<i>“ Revolutionary cadre ”</i> (listed below by father's status, 1966)				
High-level PLA officer	10%	80%	10%	62
Lower-level PLA	6%	86%	8%	66
High-level civilian Party	30%	65%	5%	60
Middle-level Party cadre	32%	61%	7%	79
Local civil-war guerrilla (still mostly rural leaders)	11%	78%	11%	18
<i>Working-class</i> (as of liberation)				
Industrial worker	36%	41%	23%	442
Poor or lower-middle peasant	23%	36%	41%	95
<i>Middle-class Family Background</i> (as of liberation)				
<i>Non-intelligentsia</i>				
Pedlars & store clerks, etc.	40%	10%	50%	250
Middle peasant	40%	10%	50%	52
<i>“ Intelligentsia ”</i>				
White collar & professionals	61%	7%	32%	562
High level (scientists, professors, etc.)	60%	7%	33%	102
<i>Bad-class</i>				
Overseas Chinese Merchant	42%	12%	46%	96
Capitalist	31%	1%	68%	140
KMT official	58%	4%	38%	50
Rightist	31%	4%	65%	26
Rich-peasant	17%	0%	83%	18
“ Bad-element ”	7%	0%	93%	14
Landlord	33%	3%	64%	39
Counter-revolutionary	31%	0%	69%	16
Total number of students in the surveyed classrooms				2187

* *Methodological Note:* In completing the questionnaire, students were asked to assess each classmate's alignment as of mid-1967, when the two factions'

working-class students' allegiance, it becomes of interest to see why different working-class students offered support to one or other of the two Red Guard camps.

Earlier in the Cultural Revolution, the overwhelming majority of the working-class students had supported the blood-line theory. As we have seen, however, at the better-than-average schools not all of them had been accepted into the initial Red Guard organization, and most of those who did get in were denied positions of leadership by the cadre children. (The elitist structure of the Red Guards which had assigned them to the bottom of the hierarchy had stoked their grievances against the revolutionary-cadre students.) As a result, at the better schools some of the students of worker-peasant origins had set up their own Red Guard organizations prior to the establishment of Rebel strength. By mid-1967 these early organizations of worker-peasant students became caught in a squeeze between the Loyalist Guards led by the children of the cadres and the Rebel organizations led by the children of intellectuals. Some of these worker-peasant units shifted towards one side, some towards the other. In particular, it appears that those working-class students who were adept in their studies felt fewer antagonisms towards their middle-class and bad-class schoolmates and felt less need to promote the class line. They tended to favour a move towards the Rebels. But a fair number of these working-class students still recognized the vulnerability of the Rebels on the question of class origins. Rather than simply attach themselves to any of the existing Rebel organizations, they established a new Rebel organization.

This pattern also in part explains how some revolutionary-cadre children became affiliated with the Rebels. Local civilian Party cadre children had been having conflicts with the students of military cadre background. They had regarded their military-born colleagues as smug

membership had stabilized. If the factions had been assessed before April 1967 there would have been many more non-participants listed. For example, rebel strength was particularly weak during the "March Black Wind," while loyalist strength, after waning in many schools during the "January Revolution," had recovered by May 1967. Another problem was whether "factional alignment" was to be defined by respondents as the faction towards which each student was most sympathetic, or more stringently as the faction in which a student was an active participant. Had we chosen the first definition of "factional alignment" the column on non-participation would have been near-empty; had we chosen the second the results would have shown a high level of non-participation. In literally hours of discussion with many of those completing the questionnaire, we tried to strike a balance between these two different definitions of factional alignment. At a minimum, to be factionally aligned a person had publicly to "put up a signboard" even if he or she were not particularly active in the organization. Rebels included those affiliated to the Red Headquarters (the large majority), the New First Headquarters, the Third Headquarters or the independent Red Rebel Alliance. Loyalists were affiliated either to the Doctrine Guards or the Red First Headquarters, or in rare cases a separate unit such as the cadre children's Independent Brigade at the elite Guangya Middle School.

Northerners, who arrogantly had never bothered to learn Cantonese and who had insisted on the highest posts when the Red Guards were initially organized. The slights experienced by the civilian Party cadre children led a minority of them to join the opposing camp. They were joined there by cadre children whose parents were already running into trouble – unfairly abandoned and scapegoated, they thought, by higher-level Party figures. Other cadre youths defected to the Rebels because they had never quite fit the mould of the typical cadre child. They included those who had been uninterested in or had been kept out of the League. But some of these cadre children who swung to the Rebels still preferred to keep those of lesser breeding at arm's length. Like the worker-peasant children, they at times also operated their own independent Rebel units.

In this light, the Rebel coalition could be considered a disparate grouping of students who shared individual or group antagonisms towards the initial Red Guard leaderships. This was precisely the basis for the Rebel strength at many of the working-class neighbourhood junior high schools. As indicated, few of the students there had been competing for higher education. Consequently, fewer antagonisms between the students of different class backgrounds had developed prior to the Cultural Revolution, and the explosion of "class hatred" had been less intense in the earlier phases of the Cultural Revolution. When the children at such schools chose sides in 1967, class background was not always the factor. More often than not, "rebels" and "loyalists" were defined on the basis of attitudes towards authority. The loyalists tended to have been the political activists and leaders before the Cultural Revolution. The "rebels" at these junior high schools now seized the opportunity to go against them.⁵² In other words, whereas large numbers of working-class children were hiving off from the Loyalists at the better schools because of antagonisms with the revolutionary-cadre children, almost equal proportions of the working-class children at the neighbourhood junior highs were deserting the Loyalist camp as non-activists opposed to the activist student leadership.

The division of classrooms along the lines of activists (Loyalist Red Guards) and anti-activists (Rebels) could be seen even more clearly in the vocational and specialist high schools (Table 6). Such schools offered only terminal degrees, with jobs assured at graduation. Thus, as at the working-class junior highs, students at such schools had not been engaged in any intense rivalry to succeed.⁵³ They resented those

52. Further numbers of working-class junior high school students attached themselves to the Rebel side because the Rebels seemed to offer a better climate for disruptive excitement.

53. The specialist school attended by Dai Hsiao-ai was an exception to this general case. [Dai's school is described in Gordon Bennett and Ronald Montaperto, *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-ai* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971) and Ronald Montaperto, "From Revolutionary Suc-

who had been aggressively activist, and moved towards the Rebel camp in response (Table 6).

Table 6: Red Guard Allegiances at Guangzhou's Vocational and Specialist Schools
(sample size: 5 classrooms)

	<i>Rebels</i>	<i>Loyalists</i>	<i>Non-Participants</i>	<i>Nos. of students</i>
Revolutionary cadre	29%	36%	36%	14
Working class	65%	34%	1%	68
Non-intelligentsia middle class	57%	9%	35%	23
Intelligentsia middle class	37%	22%	41%	32
Bad class	38%	9%	53%	34

(Note: None of these students is included in any of the other tables, which portray only the academic-track high school system.)

None of these statistics, though, indicates the degree of commitment of Red Guards to their own factions. In general, each faction had a minority core of diehard members. The majority wavered in accordance with the favourability of the general political situation. The Rebels in particular witnessed this waxing and waning of participation by their sizeable membership. It was not that any appreciable numbers went over to the opposite faction. But because the position of the Rebel faction was always more precarious, in times of adversity large numbers of would-be adherents "stood aloof."

A great many students, moreover, never joined either side, preferring the sidelines. A fair number – not just bad-class students – were being careful for fear that their origins would place them in jeopardy if their side lost. As seen in Table 7, the worse a student's background the greater the caution: middle-class children declined to participate more often than working-class students.

But these figures may be somewhat misleading. What our tables can-

cessors to Cultural Revolutionaries: Chinese Students in the Early Stages of the Cultural Revolution," in Robert Scalapino, *Elites in the People's Republic of China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972).] This was a provincially run school. Many of its students were from small towns and cities, and they considered the school their big chance for upward mobility. They were hoping for job postings in a big city rather than a county town or, better yet, the opportunity for further specialist training. Dai Hsiao-ai has read Part I of our manuscript and has informed us that, except for the fact that few high-level cadre children attended his school, the patterns of activism and the tensions which enveloped the pre-Cultural Revolution key-point schools were also largely applicable to his own school.

Table 7: Rates of Participation in the Cultural Revolution in Junior and Senior High School

(size of sample: 50 classrooms)		Key-point schools										Neighbourhood	
Senior High School		Top 4 schools		Next Best 8 schools		The 18 Ordinary schools		Junior Highs					
		R *	L	N	R	L	N	R	L	N			
Revolutionary cadre		18%	76%	6%	18%	76%	6%	14%	82%	4%			
Working class		32%	59%	9%	56%	35%	9%	39%	45%	16%	None		
Non-intelligentsia middle class		54%	4%	42%	85%	6%	9%	26%	6%	68%	in		
Intelligentsia middle class		66%	5%	29%	81%	8%	11%	56%	7%	37%	Sample		
Bad class and overseas Chinese		48%	0%	52%	62%	2%	36%	30%	3%	67%			
No. of classrooms		5		7		12							

Junior High		R	L	N	R	L	N	R	L	N	
Revolutionary cadre		14%	77%	9%	7%	76%	17%	25%	70%	5%	
Working class		33%	50%	17%	26%	35%	39%	32%	46%	22%	
Non-intelligentsia middle class *		75%	25%	0%	20%	9%	71%	39%	11%	50%	
Intelligentsia middle class		46%	10%	44%	43%	14%	43%	63%	1%	36%	
Bad class *		50%	25%	25%	30%	6%	64%	30%	2%	68%	
No. of classrooms		3		5		7				11	

* R = Rebel; L = Loyalist; N = Non-participant.

* Because there were very few of non-intelligentsia middle class or bad class origins at the top four schools, this first set of figures is not significant. Our sample of non-intelligentsia middle-class youths at the top four junior high schools comprised only four students; in the case of bad class youths there were only eight in the sample.

not bring out, but which interviews do, is that the students at the less prestigious schools, including many of the working-class students there, tended to be more lack-lustre and less consistent in their participation. Students who prior to the Cultural Revolution had been less ambitious at school – who, for example, had wanted to get manual jobs after graduating from junior high school – were less eager now to join very actively in the Cultural Revolution struggles.

It was at the better schools that the Cultural Revolution was most strenuously contested; and it was at such schools that the students tended to be more firmly attached to their own Red Guard camps. Significantly, moreover, (the Cultural Revolution struggles at these key-point schools were largely between revolutionary-cadre children and the students from the middle-class intelligentsia. These two groups provided the most fervent support for each side; they provided also the major sources of leadership.)⁵⁴ Middle-class students from the key-point schools were heavily represented in the city-wide Rebel Red Guard leadership; and the leadership ranks of the opposing Loyalists were filled overwhelmingly by revolutionary-cadre children from these same key-point schools. The earlier fierce activist competition was still playing itself out in efforts to show the greater purity of their own activist dedication, but this time at risk to their own and others' lives.

By the same token, our in-depth interviews suggest that the senior high school students in almost every category of school tended to participate with more fervour than their junior high schoolmates. The senior high students had been more achievement-orientated before the Cultural Revolution. They had been more competitively involved in trying to get into a university, had been more eagerly engaged in trying to join the League, and had in consequence been more frustrated by the "petty deeds" of classroom activism. They were now more eager than were the junior high students for the "big deeds" of the Cultural Revolution.

Generally, too, students who had been Communist Youth League members were more likely to participate than were students who had been among the "ordinary masses" (Table 8). There was a tendency, in other words, for students to continue their pre-Cultural Revolution habits of activist or non-activist behaviour. The middle-class League members' activism during the Cultural Revolution was of two sorts, though. A number of "veteran" League members, who had been

54. Sometimes, to protect their Red Guard group's reputation, the Rebel unit at a school put forward as their formal leader a young person of impeccably good-class origins, though in such cases the real leadership frequently lay with a middle-class second-in-command. Notwithstanding this manoeuvre, a disproportionately high percentage of the formal Red Guard leadership came from middle-class homes. (On this, see Stanley Rosen: "Comments on 'Radical Students in Kwangtung during the Cultural Revolution'," *CQ*, No. 70, June 1977, pp. 395–6.) For more detail on Rebel leaders, see Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism*, Chap. 4.

Table 8: League Members' Affiliations in the Cultural Revolution

(from questionnaire recollections; sample size, 50 classrooms)

(from questionnaire recollections; sample size, 50 classrooms)									
Guangzhou students in general					League members				
	Nos. of students	Rebel	Loyal	Non-party		Nos. of students	Rebel	Loyal	Non-party
Revolutionary cadre	285	19%	73%	8%		142	21%	73%	6%
Working class	537	34%	40%	26%		146	35%	51%	14%
Non-intelligentsia									
middle class	302	40%	10%	50%		25	56%	12%	32%
Intelligentsia									
middle class	664	61%	7%	32%		120	77%	11%	12%
Bad class and overseas Chinese	399	36%	4%	60%		37	62%	8%	30%

accustomed to leadership but who after 1964 had been eased aside when reliance on League members of "red" class origin was stressed, had tried to move to the forefront again by organizing "minority factions" at their school during the "Red Terror."⁵⁵ Most of the middle-class League members, however, were politically conformist and had transferred their adherence to the Red Outer Circle when the League had folded. By 1967 they had largely swung towards the Rebel camp; but many of this latter sort of middle-class League member, having been more accustomed than most students to obedience to political hierarchy, were not particularly enthusiastic about wholesale attacks against the local or provincial Party committees. They tended, as one interviewee put it, "to stay in the middle of the road pretty much, even when active in the Cultural Revolution. They didn't charge into extremes in pursuit of a 'Principle.'"

Generally it was those former, more militant, League members who were able to gain leadership posts in the Rebels, not their more conformist and more moderate colleagues from the League. Though the Rebel groups had adopted the slogan that it did not matter when you had become a Rebel so long as you were one, in reality it was the small number of students who had rebelled earliest and with the greatest noise – and especially those who had organized a "minority faction" – who now commanded the greatest respect and more often than not became recognized as the natural leaders.

Moreover, the qualities required of an activist during the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution were very different from those which had been helpful to the more conformist activists. Those who, for example, had earlier gained their League memberships by wholeheartedly "emulating Lei Feng" had been rewarded for unquestioning adherence to official policy, for a lack of independent initiative or independent thinking. But in the Cultural Revolution a young person distinguished him or herself for quite opposite qualities: for daring to go against authority, for a readiness to break rules and norms, and for a willingness to make independent, bold and quick decisions in a situation of local chaos, where directives from the helmsman were often ambiguous.

Antagonistic Beliefs

(The Rebel student leaders' claim that they, and not the Loyalists,

55. Even though the formation of the Red Guards had made the League superfluous, it had not ended the debate on the League. If anything, there were increased pronouncements by good-class students on the "revisionist" membership policies and character of that organization. Thus in addition to their gratuitous attacks on the hapless bad-class youths, some of these good-class youths had given harsh treatment to any "veteran" middle-class League members who were slow to acknowledge the absolute authority of the Red Guards. Some of these "veteran" League members were told they would be denied admission to the Outer Circle even before they had shown active signs of dissidence.

were the true followers of Mao was based upon their greater willingness to lash out at "Party capitalist roaders." This encouraged them to take a persistently militant course. There was also an emotional impetus to their attacks, in that the targets they thought needed to be toppled happened to include the parents of the revolutionary-cadre children. The Loyalists, for their part, maintained that the "crimes of a small handful" did not negate the merits of the overwhelming majority of the cadres, whose mistakes had been minor; Mao, they could note, had said repeatedly that most cadres were good or comparatively good. Hence, as Hong Yung Lee has pointed out, while the Rebel Red Guards tended to attack the highest leader in an organization, the Loyalists concentrated more on the organization's number two person. Each, to the differing Red Guard groups, became symbols of *what* should be attacked. (The Rebels were attacking the Party powers-that-be by way of the top person, whereas the Loyalist Red Guards in their attacks were saying there were merely a few bad apples *inside* the organization.⁵⁶)

Many of the Rebels also began to see their fight as an effort permanently to retain the Cultural Revolution's "great democracy." This Cultural Revolution catch-phrase came to mean the right of grass-roots groups to criticize local Party committees freely and to help determine policy through the free expression and arguing out of ideas. These democratic espousals came to serve almost as an *ex post facto* justification for their near-indiscriminate attacks on local Party organs.⁵⁷ But this does not negate the fact that "great democracy" became a genuine conviction of burning importance to some of the young Rebels. (The Loyalists meanwhile continued to hold more to the Leninist faith in Party hierarchy.)

The small minority of intellectually orientated idealists in the two Red Guard camps, who wrote many of the tracts, defined themselves and their own faction in contradistinction to the other. In the violence of competition they came to see each other as polar types. With different interpretations of how a youth's "redness" should be defined, of what targets should be attacked or protected, and, finally, of how tight or loose Party control should be, the students came to feel they were engaged in a Manichean struggle in which they themselves were the defenders of Mao's line against the demons.

Many of the participating students did not see themselves, in other

56. Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, pp. 312-22.

57. Additionally, a small minority among the Rebels had begun arguing that their attacks were not merely upon individual Party backsliders but rather a new "privileged elite." In the famous formulations of the Hunanese Red Guard group Sheng-Wu-Lian, the Party bureaucracy itself became redefined as a perpetually dangerous "new class." For a translation and analysis of the Sheng-Wu-Lian proclamation, see Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, China Research Monograph No. 4, 1969).

words, as fighting specifically on behalf of their own interests. But as we have observed, above and beyond the "ideological" principles that came to be at stake, the factions' memberships closely reflected the pre-Cultural Revolution tensions at school, and in particular tensions over the class line. [The factional violence was not merely ideological "sectarianism,"] which is what the Chinese authorities would later claim. The two factions could not be expected to reconcile their differences peaceably, despite official efforts in 1967 and 1968, so long as the underlying tensions which divided them had not been reconciled.

The splits, issues and manoeuvrings most relevant to our paper had largely been played out within the first year of the Cultural Revolution, and we need not concern ourselves here with the ensuing twists and turns of the Red Guard conflict.⁵⁸ But it should be noted that it was only a minority of youths who continued fighting. Larger numbers dropped out. Their needs to prove themselves were not usually strong enough to sustain them through two years of violence.

Even before the Cultural Revolution ended, there were indications that a "lost generation" syndrome existed. With the student fighting still in progress, Guangzhou's *Southern Daily* in March 1968 complained that some of the student population of Guangzhou had turned apolitically anarchic, and that others had adopted the view that "indolence is justified" – a pun on the Red Guard slogan "to rebel is justified." *Southern Daily* observed that many such youths cared little any longer about anything: be it the country, the Chairman, politics, their own futures, or a job.⁵⁹

For some of the Rebels who had kept fighting, the disillusionment would be even greater. Having, as it were, flown higher, their spirits had further to fall. When the PLA in Guangzhou intervened in the summer of 1968 it crushed the Rebels' remaining force of some ten thousand armed high-school students. That the PLA, if and when it entered the fray, would move to suppress them must not have surprised them; after all, our questionnaire shows fully 84 per cent of the army officers' teenaged children had enrolled actively on the Loyalist side of the lines. But insult was soon added to injury. When all of Guangzhou's secondary school students were forcibly herded back to their schools in the autumn of 1968, the PLA teams that were placed in charge of the schools made them re-enact the first "class struggle" phase of the Cultural Revolution. The same teachers who had been attacked two years before for bad-class or "historical" faults were now to be the targets once more for weeks of struggle meetings. The point was being hammered home: the Rebels had been defeated in Guangdong.

58. The interesting developments in the Red Guard movements of 1967 and 1968 are analysed in the books by Hong Yung Lee, Stanley Rosen and Anita Chan.

59. *Nanfang Ribao* (7 March 1968); in *SCMP*, No. 4144, p. 9.

But more than that, it seems Mao and his radical followers in Beijing were now also becoming willing once more to throw their own backing behind stronger class-line policies that favoured working-class young people. The radical leadership measured events as part of an evolving dialectical process. During the Cultural Revolution the "major contradiction," as defined by themselves, had involved backsliding within the Party. It had been legitimate and necessary to shape alliances to combat the menace. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, however, the historical circumstances had altered: the Party machine, let alone rectified, had been temporarily all but destroyed. The new "major contradiction" concerned the persisting influences of "bourgeois" practices and personnel. Policies were now to be geared towards weakening the status in society of the middle-class professionals. They and their children were to be the Cultural Revolution's losers.

The Forcible Rustication of the Red Guards

The Red Guards had been brought back to their schools to be disciplined and allocated to jobs. Only some of the youngest of the first-year junior high students and a chosen few of the second-year students of pure red class origins would be permitted to renew their schooling for one final year. All the remaining high school desks were needed for a younger generation. At the same time, because Guangzhou's industry had not expanded at all during the preceding two years of turmoil, there was little room in the factories for the new graduates. There was considerable irony in this, for the struggles in the Cultural Revolution had sprung in part from their prior contest to secure upward mobility. Now, instead, the great majority of the former Red Guards of both factions would have to settle in the countryside; and they were told it would most likely be for life.

Before the Cultural Revolution, all those going to the countryside from Guangzhou had been volunteers. But in this new rustication of 1968 it was a matter of being *forced* to go. The PLA teams and the Worker Propaganda Teams which had entered the schools held the power arbitrarily to determine which students could continue their schooling, which would be allocated to urban jobs, which would be conscripted into the military and which would be sent to engage in agricultural production. These decisions became a measure the Red Guards themselves used in determining whether they had "won" or "lost." It can be seen in the table below that the choice assignments were distributed largely on the basis of the class line.

In addition, our information revealed that (a) a pre-Cultural Revolution League membership was of some help to a youth in obtaining a non-rural posting, but that (b) a Loyalist affiliation in the Cultural Revolution was of considerably greater advantage; for each "class" category a substantially higher percentage of Loyalists were able to evade the countryside than was the case generally for their class

Table 9: Postings of Former Red Guards, 1968–69
(size of sample: 55 classrooms)

	<i>Entered PLA</i>	<i>Urban jobs</i>	<i>Continued studies</i>	<i>Total not going to country- side</i>	<i>Going to country- side</i>
Revolutionary cadre	26%	12%	4%	42%	58%
Working class	3%	20%	8%	31%	69%
Non-intelligentsia middle class	0%	5%	0%	5%	95%
Intelligentsia middle class	0%	3%	1%	4%	96%
Overseas Chinese	0%	1%	2%	3%	97%
Bad class	0%	1%	0%	1%	99%

category fellows. Most of the students who were sent to settle in the countryside accordingly had reasons to feel aggrieved: the Rebels, including the red-class Rebels, for the political discrimination that favoured their factional enemies; and the middle- and bad-class students for the class discrimination against themselves.

All in all, the official newspaper statistics from Guangzhou reveal that almost three-quarters of all the city's former secondary-school students were assigned to rural livelihoods during those four autumn and winter months of 1968–69.⁶⁰ This was more than twice the total number that had been mobilized to go during the entire decade prior to the Cultural Revolution. It was an exodus of more than 5 per cent of the total population of Guangzhou, amounting to most of a generation.

The Aftermath

For many of the students, the immediate heritage of the Cultural Revolution was a sense of frustration and in some cases disillusionment. In particular, contrary to what has been mistakenly believed in the West, many of Guangzhou's former Rebel Red Guards, being of middle-class background, began to adopt political perspectives antagonistic to the radical wing of the Party. They had good reasons. They had been consigned to the countryside; the new educational system hurt the career prospects of their younger brothers and sisters; the radicals' opposition to "bourgeois expertise" eroded the status and

60. Guangzhou's published statistics show 75,000 student rusticans in 1968 out of 108,000 high school students. They were joined by more than 17,000 unemployed "street youths." [*Nanfang Ribao*, 18 January 1969, in *SCMP* (Supplement), No. 246, p. 18; also Canton Radio, in *FBIS* (24 January 1969), p. D12.] The figure of 108,000 secondary-level students for the school year of 1965–66 is contained in *FBIS* (18 January 1974), p. D6.

security of their parents. Moreover, having developed ideologies of "great democracy" in the Cultural Revolution, the former Rebels now saw dangers of Party despotism in the radicals' advocacy of "politics in command."

By the spring of 1974 a number of the former leaders of Guangzhou's Rebel Red Guards were meeting with Guangdong's old-guard Party leaders to negotiate a temporary strategic alliance. Under the guise of criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius, the former Rebels agreed to mount a wall-poster publicity offensive in Guangzhou against the radical leadership group now known pejoratively as the "gang of four."⁶¹ The Rebels had come full circle; they were warily throwing in their lot with the men they had tried to topple half a decade earlier.

After the death of Mao and the purge of the "gang," a small minority would become gad-flies of the new regime, continuing to argue in wall-posters for "socialist democracy." But the defeat of the Party radicals brought into practice most of the other policies that the middle-class former Rebels had favoured: academic merit counting heavily in university selections; the "class line" overturned; the political dedication of "experts" recognized. Many of them have benefited personally from these new priorities. They had had far better educations than the young people who attended the mis-managed high schools of the early and mid-1970s,⁶² and so they have had distinct advantages in the renewed university entrance examination system. Interviews and reports in the official media suggest that these children of the intelligentsia who fought in the Cultural Revolution have now disproportionately won admittance to university.⁶³

The victory of the very Party organization they had tried to destroy has resolved the "class" warfare of the Cultural Revolution ultimately in the middle-class students' favour, a full decade after. It is the final irony of the Red Guard saga.

61. Anita Chan: "Introduction," in Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger, editors: "The Case of Li I-che," *Chinese Law and Government* (Autumn 1977), pp. 1-112 and Stanley Rosen, ed., "The Rehabilitation and Dissolution of Li Yizhe," *Chinese Law and Government* (forthcoming). Also Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger: *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe and Wei Jingsheng Controversies* (White Plains: M. E. Sharpe Inc.), forthcoming. Details of these intricate political manoeuvrings are described also in a serialized article, "Li Yizhe and I" (in Chinese), in *Bei Dou* (Hong Kong), in the June, July, August, September, November and December 1977 issues. For a more recent discussion, see *Dong Xiang* (Hong Kong), No. 5, 1979.

62. On the urban high schools and student peer groups after the Cultural Revolution, see Jonathan Unger, *Education Under Mao: A Study of Canton Schools 1960-1980* (Columbia University Press, forthcoming), Chaps. 7 and 9.

63. See e.g. *Renmin Ribao* (3 March 1978), p. 4 and *Renmin Ribao* (11 March 1978), p. 4.